Reviewer's report

Title: Stoical patients are more likely to have colorectal cancer

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Reviewer: Magdalena Esteva

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Review: 'Stoical patients are more likely to have colorectal cancer'
Magdalena Esteva

This is a study evaluating how stoical patients (those who consider any symptom as less seriously than others) waiting for colonoscopy are more prone to have colorectal cancer.
- An article of limited interest
- Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Reviewer comments

1.- Introduction
There are some weakness in the introduction that I think have to be afforded. The authors consider there is little research on the variability on how seriously people take their symptoms. However, there is considerable research from different disciplines as sociology and anthropology ..... on symptom interpretation process, symptom seriousness and diagnosis delay, symptom seriousness and help seeking behaviour, how disruptive symptoms are perceived as more serious. A sounder literature review is needed.

2. Methods:
The design of the study is not well defined in the methods sections but well defined in the abstract.

In the section 'Assessment of predictive validity', has to be added ' question predictive validity for presence of colorectal cancer.

Statistical analysis of predictive validity: Logistic regression. Authors must explain why they have not considered other variables with univariate low p values (<0.10 or <0.25) as recommends Lemeshow in order to explore confusion?. If symptom perceptions is a new variable more variables of the previous study have to be included in the model. Nagerkele value of the model could be interesting.

Statistical package used is needed.

Results:

Presentation of data is not sound. It will be much clear if all data is presented in tables together with results each statistical analysis. No figures in the manuscript as tables in this case are much more informative. Complete logistic regression
model has to be presented in the correspondent table as it contains valuable information.

Discussion

In the first paragraph authors declare a 2-fold increase in prevalence of colorectal cancer in those who take any symptom as less or lot less seriously compared with the same as others but adjusted OR IS 1.47 with a confidence interval that contains 1. The importance and dimension of these results have to be discussed more thoroughly and how this fact affects predictive validity. Consequently, last paragraph in pg 11 is too ambitious because authors have not built and obtained a robust predictive model. Moreover, if authors consider that comparison of those who take symptoms seriously vs less seriously is more relevant, reference category in adjusted and unadjusted analysis for this variable has to be changed.

Discussion section is quite limited. Discuss very little about differences and similarities of others authors results. In fact there are only 3 references in the discussion section.

Discuss how bowel symptoms considered by others as disrupting and often taken as serious like abdominal pain decreases in patients who take any symptom seriously.

Others points of interest in the discussion are:

Is the question explored a proxy of stoical?. Content or construct validity limitations.

If the authors consider that those who take their symptoms more seriously than others access health services for minor symptoms that do not reflect organic pathology. How this fits with proven evidence that the main reason to visit a doctor is bad health?.

People waiting for colonoscopy are not general population, Most of them have experienced bowel symptoms and most of them could be expecting disappointing results. Would you expect different results from general population?

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: -- Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I have not conflict of interest