Author's response to reviews

Title: Avoidance Behaviors and Negative Psychological Responses in the General Population in the Initial Stage of the H1N1 Pandemic in Hong Kong

Authors:

Joseph TF Lau (jlau@cuhk.edu.hk)
Sian M Griffiths (siangriffiths@cuhk.edu.hk)
Kai-chow Choi (kchoi@cuhk.edu.hk)
Hi Yi Tsui (hytsui@cuhk.edu.hk)

Version: 5 Date: 14 April 2010

Author's response to reviews:

Dear Dr. Norton,

Thank you again for your interests in our paper titled “Avoidance behaviors and negative psychological responses in the general population in the initial stage of the H1N1 pandemic in Hong Kong”. We would like to express our gratitude to the reviewers taking time from their already busy schedules to provide commentary on the manuscript. We have revised the manuscript with full account of the comments by the reviewers. Our responses are attached in the appendix enclosed.

Looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Joseph T. F. Lau
Associate Director, School of Public Health and Primary Care
Director, Centre for Health Behaviours Research
School of Public Health and Primary Care, Faculty of Medicine
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
5/F., School of Public Health and Primary Care
Prince of Wales Hospital, Shatin, NT
Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2252-8727
Fax: (852) 2645-3098
e-mail: jlau@cuhk.edu.hk

Encl.
Appendix 1 Responses to Reviewers

Reviewer 1' Comments to Author:

The authors have done a very good job in revising the manuscript, which now reads much better and provides a very interesting and clear addition to the literature in this area. I have only one remaining concern that I do not think has been adequately addressed, and that relates to the overlap between this paper and that previously published by the authors:

MINOR ESSENTIAL

1) Data on most of the participants discussed in this paper have already been reported in any previous publication (Lau et al, J Infectious Diseases 2009;59:122-127). It is therefore essential that a very explicit statement is made in the current paper saying something like: "Preliminary data from the May 7 to May 9 survey have previously been reported elsewhere (ref 17)." I would suggest inserting this into the first paragraph of the Methods section. This is important so that readers are not confused by the existence of these two similar papers. Simply saying that the questionnaires used in this paper were also used in a baseline H1N1 study (p6) or that "a study" was conducted in the initial phase of the outbreak (p4) is not sufficient.

A: We have added the suggested statement in the first paragraph of the Methods section accordingly (please see page 6 of the revised text). Thanks much for the comment.

2) Elsewhere in this paper, the authors imply that the data in reference 17 is an entirely separate "study" ("a previous study showed that" p10-11) which gives the misleading impression that a different data set has produced the same results. This should be amended to read "a previous analysis of our May 7 to May 9 data showed that..."

A: We have amended the statement accordingly (please see page 11 of the revised text).