Author's response to reviews

Title: Occupational exposure to blood-borne infection: survey of universal precautions knowledge and reported injuries in Kabul hospital staff

Authors:

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Version: 3 Date: 24 December 2009

Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Sir or Madam,

Thank you for the helpful comments. We think there may have been a problem when the paper was uploaded last time so the referees commented on an earlier version, but we think this is all straight now.

Just in case the detail is important, On the 1 October I wrote to you

Dear Hayley Hewitt,

I haven’t been able to log in to *http://www.biomedcentral.com/manuscript/login/man.asp?txt_nav=man&txt_man_id=1257603140281603* to submit the document. Therefore, I would like to submit them for your kind consideration. Please find attached the revised manuscript, the revised manuscript in track changes as well as a cover letter. Thank you.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

Ahmad Shah Salehi

And attached were a covering letter, a file with track changes, and a file with changes accepted. Neither version of the paper had tables duplicated, and neither had table 3, which is commented on by the first referee. Unfortunately I did not check the PDF file when I heard back from you after you have uploaded it. We are not clear what has happened here, but we have made the various corrections.

CURRENT VERSION

Both authors made some additional comments that we have carefully gone through, and the paper is considerably shorter. We took out the questionnaire at the request of this referee. We submit to you the track changes and the accepted versions. Thank you for your patience.

Version: 2, Date: 3 November 2009

Reviewer: Pedro Moro

Reviewer’s report:

| The article has improved but there are a few things that need to be corrected before the manuscript can be published: | Yes this was an error and now has been corrected. |
| 1) In the results section there is a subheading for the findings regarding the knowledge of healthcare workers interviewed. However, there is no section to describe the findings regarding the practices of the healthcare workers. The text in the knowledge section mentions that …used needles can be recapped (82.1%) but in table 3 the percentage is 17.9%. | The questions are confusing because some the correct answer is the opposite. We have now attended to this. |
| Likewise, the text says that isolation is necessary for patients with bloodborne infections (30%) but the text indicates 70%. | We agree. This is now corrected. |
| Table 3 is confusing. The title of the table has to make it easily understandable what is being shown: for example, it could be: Table 3. | In the last submission the paper did not have Table 3. However, this is now corrected. Thanks for the help. |
Percentage of healthcare workers who agreed with the following statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is not clear what the word correct means in table 3 (the word correct to the right of each heading in the table). This should be explained or the table should be made in such a way as not to be confusing.</td>
<td>This is confusing. We have corrected this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) There are two sets of tables 1 and 2. The questionnaire in the annex should not be included. As mentioned above, table 3 needs to be improved.</td>
<td>We are not sure how this happened. Table 3 is in the version submitted now table 2, and has been improved. We are unclear what happened: it was not in the version we submitted to BMC but we did have trouble with the submission system from Afghanistan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Table 1 only shows needlesticks but not how many healthcare workers there were for the different characteristics. This should be shown. I suggest the authors consult several similar publications where similar data has been displayed.</td>
<td>This is now clear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Table 2 is showing the circumstances of needlestick injuries and should be titled accordingly.</td>
<td>Table two was from a previous version, see above.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Version: 2, Date: 9 November 2009

Reviewer: Janet E Hiller

Reviewer's report:

A close read by a native English speaker would be most useful.

Major compulsory revisions
1. Although the paper is much improved there remain some difficulties with English expression that make it difficult for the reader to follow the argument

   Abstract: Last para. "monitor risk[s]"... "to improve occupational [health] in Kabul" Introduction: Para 1. "contact with body non-intact skin..." (needs rewrite)

   Para 2. "health workers ranges [should be ranging] from 6%..."

   para 3 Last sentence is not clear

   Methods

   Para 1 Ministry of Public Health - not ministry of public health etc.

   Table 1 should include variation by age as this is noted in the text. In addition, the table refers to vaccination status but the text only refers to "the experience" - this should be changed to "vaccination status"

   Table 2 and the data in Table 2 do not always agree. For example, in the text it states that 70% of health care workers thought universal precautions applied to patients with HIV and hepatitis only. The way the data are presented in the table it appears that 70% were correct in their responses ie 70% new that universal precautions applied to all patients - a contradiction to the way it is presented in the text. Similar

   The second author apologizes and has now carefully gone through every sentence.

   Modified.

   Agree. Done
confusion appears with the re-capping of needles. The conclusion also includes confusion statements e.g. that 2/3rds of health care workers consider that universal precautions are necessary in situations that lead to contact with saliva. Careful attention needs to be paid to the data included in the table and the text used to describe these data.

Minor essential revisions
In the reference list, at times the authors include the issue number as well as the volume number. In other instances only the volume number is included. A consistent approach to referencing is ideal.

This has all been checked and corrected.

Version: 2, Date: 14 October 2009
Reviewer: Derek Smith
Reviewer's report:
This revised manuscript has been improved. However, there are still a few errors in the reference list that need to be fixed.

| Reference 15: the journal name needs to be spelled out in full | Agree. Done |
| Reference 17: The authors’ names are incorrectly abbreviated. They should be ‘Smith DR, Smyth W, etc’. | Agree. Checked. Done |
| Reference 20: The author’s name is incorrectly written. It should be ‘Smith DR' | Thank you. Checked. Done |

Attached please find the revised manuscript and the revised manuscript in track changes. Thank you.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Ahmad Shah Salehi