Author's response to reviews

Title: Adherence to cancer screening guidelines across Canadian provinces: an observational study

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Dr. Marshall,

Please find enclosed our revised research article submission to *BMC Cancer* entitled “Adherence to cancer screening guidelines across Canadian provinces: an observational study”. Below are point-by-point responses to the concerns and questions raised by the editors and referees:

Editors:
1. The data used in the study were the microdata version of the CCHS data files, accessible to researchers only through Statistics Canada Research Data Centers. A research proposal was submitted and approved as Project # 08-SSH-MTL-1583 in June 2008. Footnote i on page 4 clarifies this point. CCHS data files that have some variables masked are available publicly.

Referee #1:
2. The text has been changed to the past tense, particularly for the description of the research methods and results.
3. The discussion of accuracy of self-reported screening was expanded in the Limitations section (page 7). The reviewer made a good point about differential accuracy across the age threshold potentially biasing our findings. However, among the many published articles comparing self-reports of cancer screening with medical records or other validated measures, almost none of them compare the degree of agreement of these measures across age of the respondent/patient. The additional cited article (Caplan et al) does actually address this question and finds no significant difference in the sensitivity of self-report across ages. We acknowledge the need for future research on this question in order to help validate our measure of compliance, but did not find any existing evidence to suggest this is a serious problem.
4. A sentence was added on page 6 describing the positive correlation between income and screening rates, and the lack of any consistent correlation between income and guideline compliance in these data.
5. “Though” has been changed to “through”.

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6. The sample sizes of the age groups examined in each province (N) for each dependent variable are listed in the notes at the bottom of Table 2.
7. The first sentence clarifies breast cancer screening, which should make the reason we’re looking only at women more clear.
8. 19.34 has been changed to 19.3.

Referee #2:
9. “Effectiveness” has been changed to “efficacy”.
10. The references to percent increases over mean rates have been removed. Odds ratios and percentage point increases remain in the text, with the explanation of the conversion of odds ratios to relative risks on the top of page 5.

I have updated the revised manuscript, with changes marked with track changes. The original figure files remain, as they have not changed.

Of course, if the referees or editors have any further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me. I can be reached at (514) 398-2880 and erin.strumpf@mcgill.ca.

Sincerely,

Erin Strumpf, Ph.D.