Author's response to reviews

Title: The influence of nativity and neighborhoods on breast cancer stage at diagnosis and survival among California Hispanic women

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Author's response to reviews:

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Editorial Board, BMC Cancer

Dear Editorial Board:

We are delighted to hear that our manuscript, “The influence of nativity and neighborhoods on breast cancer stage at diagnosis and survival among California Hispanic women” (212727736362598), has been provisionally accepted for publication in BMC Cancer. We have further revised the manuscript in response to the comments raised by Reviewer 2. Below is a response to each of the comments raised by the Reviewer.

Revisions to the paper are noted by tracked changes in the file uploaded in the section, “Additional material files.” The revised manuscript formatted according to journal specifications and without tracked changes has been uploaded in the “Main manuscript” section.

Sincerely,

Theresa Keegan, PhD

Response to Reviewer 2 comments

Comment 1: Please underscore on page 4 that the Hispanic population is comprised of mostly Mexican American women

Response: On page 4, we now state that the Hispanic population is primarily of Mexican descent.
Comment 2: On page 4 after listing the excluded cases, please state the analytical or final sample, 37,695.

Response: The final sample size of 37,695 is stated after the exclusions on page 4.

Comment 3: The authors stated in the response letter that the imputation for the missing data on nativity status may bias the results away from the null. This issue should be stated on page 5 and/or the discussion page 14.

Response: In our prior response to this reviewer, we stated that “because of the joint association of missing birthplace with birthplace itself and vital status, excluding cases with missing birthplace in this analysis would bias the results away from the null.” To clarify, the exclusion of cases, not our imputation, could bias results from the null. We have added this statement to page 5 of the paper.

Comment 4: The authors stated that the neighborhood Hispanic enclave composite index explains 68% of the variability in the data (page 6). For consistency, please state the proportion of variability explains by the neighborhood SES index.

Response: We have added the percentage of the variable explained by the neighborhood socioeconomic status index (page 6).

Comment 5: In the statistical analysis, please add that the visual inspection of the survival curves was done in addition to formal tests of the proportional hazards assumption (page 8).

Response: We assessed the proportional hazards assumption by visual inspection of the survival curves, and state this on page 8.

Comment 6: On page 8, please add the number of block groups the sample was distributed.

Response: The cases were from 16,530 block groups (now noted on page 8).

Comment 7: Given the justification the authors provided regarding the CHIS analyses on Table 4 perhaps this should be your Table 1 to provide background information to the reader of the population according to nativity status. Please consider re-arranging the tables.

Response: The California Health Interview Survey data can help inform the associations seen in our study. Therefore, we prefer to present the results from our study population before presenting the California Health Interview Survey data.

Comment 8: Please include the sample sizes for US- and foreign-born in Table 4. Along this line, the authors suggest on the response letter that given the data
presented on table 4, the row percents could be calculated. The reviewer is curious on that one given that not sample sizes are provided in the table and the data should be weighted to account for the complex sampling design of the CHIS. Always eager to learn something new :) 

Response: The California Health Interview survey data are weighted to approximate the California population living in households, so the actual sample sizes are not available through the AskCHIS application used to generate the data for this manuscript. Therefore, the estimated sample size for US- and foreign-born Hispanics in the 2001 and 2003 California Health Interview Surveys are presented in the footnote of Table 4. 

In our prior response to this Reviewer, we stated that row percentages could be calculated for the data presented in Table 1. Specifically, the prior comment that we responded to stated, “Table 1 should present row percents instead of column percents” (Comment 21). In Table 1, we have provided the sample sizes for US- and foreign-born Hispanics.