Author’s response to reviews

Title: Characteristics, survival, and related factors of newly diagnosed colorectal cancer patients refusing cancer treatments under a universal health insurance program

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Author’s response to reviews: see over
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Professor Melissa Norton
Editor-in-Chief, *BMC Cancer*

Dear Professor Norton:

We would like to submit a manuscript entitled “Characteristics, survival, and related factors of newly diagnosed colorectal cancer patients refusing cancer treatments under a universal health insurance program” for consideration for publication as an original article in *BMC Cancer*.

According to the World Health Organization, cancer caused 7.6 million deaths worldwide in 2008 alone. In the United States, colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer in both men and women and is also the third leading cause of cancer-related deaths. During 2004–2008, a total of 52,324 new cases of colorectal cancer were diagnosed in Taiwan.

Since its inception in 1995, Taiwan’s National Health Insurance program has achieved 99.9% coverage and succeeded in making quality health care universal and affordable for patients. However, among the 41,340 new colorectal cancer cases diagnosed between 2004 and 2008 that were included in our study, 3,612 patients (8.74%) refused treatment. This study aimed to examine the characteristics and survival associated with treatment refusal for these patients.

We identified several important factors that correlated with treatment refusal, including age at diagnosis, urbanization level of residence location, insured monthly salary, low-income household status, preexisting catastrophic illnesses or injuries, cancer stage, and level of diagnosing hospital. Patients who refused treatment were found to have 2.66 times the risk of death as those who underwent treatment. We also found that an age of 75 years or older, low-income household status, advanced stages of cancer, especially stage IV, were associated with higher risks of death for those who refused treatment.

We confirm that this manuscript has not been published elsewhere and is not under consideration by another journal. All authors have approved the manuscript and agreed with submission to *BMC Cancer*. This study was supported by grants from China Medical University, Asia University, and the Taiwan Bureau of Health Promotion. The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

We believe that our study results are important and significant, and your consideration for publication in *BMC Cancer* would be very much appreciated. If you have any questions or need any additional information, please let us know.
Yours sincerely,

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