Author's response to reviews

Title: Worldwide trends in mortality from biliary tract malignancies

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Version: Date: 3 May 2002

We thank the expert reviewers for their helpful comments, and are pleased that they find this work to be of importance.

Reviewer 1: The comments regarding geographical classification are appropriate. However, the specific rates for each country are clearly delineated in Table 1, and thus it would not be difficult for the reader to identify those trends of interest. The change in classification does not significantly alter the main features of the Figure, and thus no specific changes have been made.

The designation "we" has been used as per our institutional editorial guidelines, and in this context is meant to emphasize that the findings are dependent on input by several individuals who have contributed to the developing, maintaining and making publically available the databases used for this study.

Reviewer 2: The expertise of the reviewer is appreciated, and we concur with the comments. For this analysis, the data that was available in entirety to us has been used. We concur that it would have been more appropriate to use another year for a standard population, and acknowledge the limitations of the use of the EAPC. However, more specific details regarding the mortality rates were not available, precluding a more detailed analysis. As our intent was not to compare specific regional differences, but rather to emphasize the common global trends, a more detailed modeling and analysis was not performed. Furthermore, the validity of any analysis would require that the reporting mechanisms for each country were similar and that comparable data was being compiled in the mortality statistics. We do not have any data regarding this. Similarly inadequate data was publicly available to determine error rates, although such error rates can be approximated based on the baseline population.