Author's response to reviews

Title: An Electronic Application for Rapidly Calculating Charlson Comorbidity Score

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Version: 2 Date: 21 September 2004

Author's response to reviews: see over
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September 6, 2004

Dear BMC Editorial Staff:

We submitted an article entitled to BMC Cancer in March of 2004 entitled “An electronic application for rapidly calculating Charlson comorbidity score,” manuscript number 209665906334100 which was accepted pending minor revisions and formatting changes. All formatting changes have been made. Two reviewers critiqued the article and we have made revisions to reflect their recommendations. The following is a point-by-point explanation of our responses to the reviewer’s comments. Our responses follow each of the reviewer’s comments in bold print.

Reviewer’s report

Title: An Electronic Application for Rapidly Calculating Charlson Comorbidity Score

Version: 1 Date: 25 May 2004

Reviewer: Stephen F Hall

Reviewer's report:

General The thorough discussion of the CCI leaves the reader to make his own decision on the merits of the index.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore) The only suggestion I have relates to the repeated mention of clinical trials. The last time I checked out RTCs they were using ECOG or Karnofsky, so the authors should justify why the Charlson might be better.

Dr. Hall is correct in pointing out that performance status has been successfully used in clinical research whereas comorbidity has not been widely used. There are a number of reasons for this, such as disagreement among cooperative groups as to which comorbidity
scale should be used and the relatively new status of comorbidity as a prognostic variable. Furthermore, the majority of research investigating the prognostic importance of comorbidity has been retrospective in nature and unfortunately has not compared comorbidity to performance status. There are three published reports, all retrospective, comparing comorbidity to either KPS or ECOG performance status, each of which suggest that comorbidity and performance status have independent prognostic significance. We have added a brief paragraph reviewing these publications in the discussion section of this version of the manuscript.

What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests: none

Reviewer's report:

Title: An Electronic Application for Rapidly Calculating Charlson Comorbidity Score

Version: 1 Date: 6 August 2004

Reviewer: Jay Piccirillo

Reviewer's report:

General

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Please correct spelling of Piccirillo. Please note existence of web-based comorbidity calculator:
http://oto.wustl.edu/clinepi/calc.html

We now reference Dr. Piccirillo’s web-based comorbidity calculator in the discussion section of the manuscript.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests: None

We appreciate your time in reviewing these responses. We believe that this is an important manuscript and that it will result in the increased use of the Charlson Index, and other comorbidity indices, to control for comorbidity in clinical research. Please feel free to contact us if you have any additional questions or concerns regarding this manuscript.

Sincerely,

William H Hall, MD
Ramanathan Ramachandran
Ashesh B Jani, MD
Samir Narayan, MD
Srinivasan Vijayakumar, MD