Author's response to reviews

Title: Public Perceptions and Attitudes towards Thalassaemia: Influencing factors in a Multi-racial Population

Authors:

Li Ping Wong (wonglp@ummc.edu.my)
Elizabeth George (elizg@medic.upm.edu.my)
Jin-Ai Mary Anne Tan (maryanne@ummc.edu.my)

Version: 3 Date: 20 February 2011

Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Sir,

Thank you for your resent email asking for second revision and resubmission of this manuscript. I have pleasure in submitting the revision.

Also enclosed the Manuscript with correction tracks that illustrate in full details all the changes recommended by the BMC Editorial (mail dated Jan 31, 2011) and reviewers. The detail responses to BMC Editorial and reviewer comments were highlighted in blue.

Please do not hesitate to contact me again if any further changes or amendments needed, I am very much willing to revise this manuscript again if necessary.

Once again, thank you very much for considering and reviewing this article.

Looking forward to your reply.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Wong Li Ping

Department of Social and Preventive Medicine, Faculty of Medicine
University of Malaya
Tel: 603-79675778
Email:wonglp@ummc.edu.my
A: Responses to BMC Editorial, mail dated Jan 31, 2011

We are writing to update you as to the status of your manuscript (above) which is currently under consideration at BMC Public Health.

We sincerely apologise for any delay caused to your manuscript, currently we are awaiting a report from one of the original reviewers. Please be assured that we are working to obtain this report as soon as possible. If it appears that we cannot obtain this report, we will approach our Editorial Board for further advice.

However, before we do this, we require some further clarification on your manuscript. Specifically, we require some clarification regarding validation of the questionnaire that was used in your study.

In your manuscript, you state that "The questionnaire was adapted and modified from previous published literature [7,10,12,13]."

In your response to reviewer comments, you also state that the questionnaire was reviewed by an expert to assess content validity.

We would like to ask for a response to the following points:

How was the validation conducted? Please provide details on the method of validation, the modifications made and how the adapted questionnaire was tested. Please also provide details on the population that the questionnaire was tested on.

Added in Method section pg 8

“The questionnaire was content validated by a panel of experts who are also researchers of the study to ensure that the items have acceptability content validity. After some minor modifications the questionnaire was reevaluated by the same panel of experts. The final draft version was pilot tested on 20 random samples of different ethnic population from the telephone directory. The questionnaire was face validity and tested on the Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) system. “

Did the questionnaire require translation from another language?

Yes, the questionnaire was translated to other languages. Added in Pg 8

“The questionnaire was translated into Bahasa Malaysia (the national language of Malaysia) and Chinese (Mandarin). The questionnaire was in English and translated into Bahasa Malaysia (the national language of Malaysia) and Chinese (Mandarin). The translated questionnaires were reviewed by secondary translators and back translation was conducted on the primary translated version. All back translations were reviewed by the researchers where edits to the target language version were made as necessary.”
How was the expert selected to validate this study? Did they have any previous experience validation questionnaires? If you have previously published a manuscript concerning validation of the questionnaire, please provide details.

The questionnaire was content validated by a panel of experts who are also researchers. In the study, and in our country, the second and third authors are the leading expert in related to this field in Malaysia. Please note that we have added Prof Dr George, E. as second author as she played an important role in validation of the questionnaire.

In most of my publications, 1) the internal consistency/internal reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach’s alpha test, 2) secondly, the questionnaires were face and content validated (not statistics) by panel of expert of the field. Content validation is done by content experts, where important items relevant to research questions should be covered in the questionnaire. Face validation was done in pilot test.

We apologize the questionnaire did not undergo construct validity. We viewed that as our aim is not to establish an instrument for measures, therefore construct validation was not done. Furthermore, we don’t have good experience in calculating construct validation. We have come across many population surveys that only conduct face and content validation on their instruments. Enclosed in the email is some of my previously published paper that used similar methods. We believed with our detail explanation, readers are able to interpret the finding based on the limitation of our survey instruments.

Also added in Method section pg 8

“The questionnaire was content validated by a panel of experts who are also researchers of the study to ensure that the items have acceptability content validity. The final draft version was pilot tested on 20 random samples of different ethnic population from the telephone directory. The questionnaire was face validity of the questionnaire and tested on the Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) system. “

B. Response to Reviewer's report (Referee 3)

Title: Public Perceptions and Attitudes towards Thalassaemia: Influencing factors in a Multi-racial Population
Version: 2 Date: 27 September 2010
Reviewer: Jenny Hewison
Reviewer's report:
The proposed changes suggested by the authors are insufficient to address my concerns, particularly regarding the reporting and interpretation of the literature and of their own statistical analyses.

As indicated by Reviewer 4, “Analysis plan and description of results. The multiple regression analysis should be omitted, together with all reference to its results. Only a minute amount of explanatory power is achieved, and the reported statistical significance simply reflects the large sample size. Drawing policy conclusions on the basis of these analyses is misguided and likely to mislead. The same applies to the correlational analyses.”
Results from multiple regression analysis removed in Discussion section, pg 14

“Results from multiple linear regression analysis show that having a higher income was significantly associated with a higher knowledge score. As such, future educational efforts should be aimed at increasing knowledge among the less income groups.”

In Results section, findings from correlational analyses were “Spearman rank correlation analysis showed a weak but significant positive correlation between agreement in opinion that couples who are thalassaemia carriers should not have children and educational level ($r=0.058$, $P<0.001$). Likewise, significantly lower agreement among the Malay participants was found for the question regarding termination of an affected pregnancy with thalassaemia major. Similarly, Spearman rank correlation analysis showed a weak but significant positive correlation between agreement in opinion of termination of pregnancy and educational level ($r=0.079$, $P<0.001$).” [These findings were not mentioned in Discussion and Conclusion sections, therefore nothing removed from Discussion section with regard to correlational analyses]

Also deleted the following sentence in Abstract.

“Multiple linear regression analysis shows that average household income significantly predict knowledge score.”

Level of interest: An article of limited interest
Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being Published. The manuscript has been sent for English editing, corrections are shown in correction tracks.

# Note: No response to Referee 1 as there is no further comment from him.

C. Response to Editorial Board member comments:

I have read the final version of the paper and all the comments by the referees. I consider this paper is of considerable public health importance. The authors have dealt reasonably with comments by the majority of referees with whose comments I agree with. My main criticism is that in the discussion they go beyond their findings in making recommendations for policy. Referee number 4 also had reservations about this. Referee number 4 said "Drawing policy conclusions on the basis of these analyses is misguided and likely to mislead."

If they only discussed the findings and compared them with other studies and omitted the policy implications, I would consider paper suitable for publication.

Comment from Referee was “Analysis plan and description of results. The multiple regression analysis should be omitted, together with all reference to its results. Only a minute amount of explanatory power is achieved, and the reported statistical significance simply reflects the large sample size. Drawing policy conclusions on the basis of these analyses is misguided and likely to mislead. The same applies to the correlational analyses.”

Results from multiple regression analysis removed, pg 14
Results from multiple linear regression analysis show that having a higher income was significantly associated with a higher knowledge score. As such, future educational efforts should be aimed at increasing knowledge among the less income groups. [This sentence has been removed]

Findings from correlational analyses was “Spearman rank correlation analysis showed a weak but significant positive correlation between agreement in opinion that couples who are thalassaemia carriers should not have children and educational level ($r=0.058$, $P<0.001$). Likewise, significantly lower agreement among the Malay participants was found for the question regarding termination of an affected pregnancy with thalassaemia major. Similarly, Spearman rank correlation analysis showed a weak but significant positive correlation between agreement in opinion of termination of pregnancy and educational level ($r=0.079$, $P<0.001$).” [These findings were not mentioned in Discussion and Conclusion sections]

Also deleted the following sentence in Abstract.

“Multiple linear regression analysis shows that average household income significantly predict knowledge score.”