Author's response to reviews

Title: Drug suicide: a gender-equal cause of death in 16 European countries Or Intentional drugs overdose kills men and women equally: a study of 16 European countries

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Cover letter to MS: 3266480684680502 - Research article
Drug suicide: a gender-equal cause of death in 16 European countries Or Intentional
drugs overdose kills men and women equally: a study of 16 European countries
Airi Värnik, Merike Sisask, Peeter Värnik, Jing Wu, Kairi Kõlves, Ella Arensman,
Margareth Maxwell, Thomas Reisch, Ricardo Gusmão, Chantal van Audenhove, Gert
Scheerder, Christina M. van der Feltz-Cornelis, Claire Coffey, Maria Kopp, Andras
Szekely, Saska Roskar and Ulrich Hegerl BMC Public Health

Dear Dr Silvia Martins,

We would like to thank you and both reviewers for the valuable suggestions, which
we followed in the present version of our manuscript. Please find below our point-by-
point responses to your’s and the reviewers’ concerns.

*Title - It has come to our attention that you have one title in your manuscript PDF,
but another on our system. Please clarify which title you wish to use.
Response: We prefer the title: Drug suicide: a gender-sex-equal cause of death in 16 European
countries.

*Abstract - Include information about the context of your study your abstract.
Response: We increased the number of words in abstract to 300 and thus improved the context.

*Ethics - Experimental research that is reported in the manuscript must have been
performed with the approval of an appropriate ethics committee. Research carried
out on humans must be in compliance with the Helsinki Declaration
(http://www.wma.net/e/policy/b3.htm), and any experimental research on animals
must follow internationally recognized guidelines. A statement to this effect must
appear in the Methods section of the manuscript, including the name of the body
which gave approval, with a reference number where appropriate.
Response: Anonymous aggregate level data have been used for analysis and none of personal
information was presented in our study so that we will not make the impact of the
study on physical, mental and social integrity of human being.

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Please also highlight (with 'tracked changes'/coloured/underlines/highlighted text) all
changes made when revising the manuscript to make it easier for the Editors to give
you a prompt decision on your manuscript.
Response: ‘tracked changes’ and ‘Coloured’ are used in the revised text of the manuscript.

Please also ensure that your revised manuscript conforms to the journal style
(http://www.biomedcentral.com/info/ifora/medicine_journals). It is important that your
files are correctly formatted.
Response: The journal style is carefully followed.
Reviewer’s report
Title: Drug suicide: a gender-equal cause of death in 16 European countries Or Intentional drugs overdose kills men and women equally: a study of 16 European countries Which?
Response:
We prefer the title: Drug suicide: a gender-sex-equal cause of death in 16 European countries.

Version: 1 Date: 19 November 2010
Reviewer: Yury Razvodovsky
Reviewer’s report:
This manuscript presents the results of a study that examine gender- and age-specific rates of suicide by drug self-poisoning in 16 European countries. The authors have done a great job and collected unique data. The paper is clearly written and the conclusions are justified by the results. A number of limitations are discussed. As a result it appears to be a valuable contribution to the existing literature.
There is minor suggestion (no major point of criticism): in the Result section statistical significance of the correlations should be presented.
Response:
We correlated the population data, not the sample from the population, which means that statistical significance is not relevant issue here.
This paper can be published with minor revision as suggested.
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.
Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.

Reviewer’s report
Title: Drug suicide: a gender-equal cause of death in 16 European countries Or Intentional drugs overdose kills men and women equally: a study of 16 European countries
Version: 1 Date: 24 November 2010
Reviewer: Martin Voracek
Reviewer’s report:
This ms. is due to a collaborative effort of a consortium of well-known, excellent researchers in suicidology. The data and lines of evidence reported therein are novel, newsworthy, interesting, and do have clear public health implications (suicide prevention). Among other things, an important conclusion of this paper is that the ICD coding system for overdose suicides is in need for a revision. One drawback is that the data available for this series of analyses (not hitherto publicly available, but beneficially included in the tables accompanying this report) are not really up-to-date (2000-2005).
Response:
Gathering the data from numerous countries was a very complicated task, and the optimal solution was to include data for the same years for all countries, which resulted in selecting the years presented in the study.
On the other hand, this shortcoming is explicitly acknowledged under study limitations. Specifically, I was especially impressed with the thoughtful and extensive elaboration in the Discussion and Study strengths and limitations sections. All in all, there is little to quibble with this ms., as it currently stands.

Minor essential revisions:
The double title is unusual, to some extent, awkward, and not really necessary.

Response:
Answered above.
Please reconsider and aim for a more concise title.
Please substitute females and males with women and men and gender or gender differences with sex and sex differences (throughout the ms.).

Response:
We prefer to be in compliance with WHO terminology, we will change gender to sex, but keep males and females.
On p. 8, 1st full para, 2nd sentence suicide attempts?? (instead of suicides) seem to be meant, if I am right (since the theme discussed in this passage is parasuicide, not completed suicide).

Response:
Thanks for drawing attention, the correction will be made.

P. 10, para 1, sentence 1: I conjecture the authors mean that the distribution of suicide rates across the lifespan (age brackets) is "not uniform" (instead of: "not linear") - because there is no "linear distribution", but the uniform distribution is well-known.

Response:
Thanks for the comment, the correction will be made.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.