Author's response to reviews

Title: Can we use the pharmacy data to estimate the prevalence of chronic conditions? A comparison of multiple data sources

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Natasha Mellins-Cohen  
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Rome, August 11, 2011

Dear Editor,

We would like to submit the further version of the manuscript MS 6066988615209581. Following your suggestions, we attached a point-by-point list of answers to the third reviewer’s comments and in the new version the changes are coloured in red. We hope that the manuscript be suitable for publication in BMC Public Health.

Best regards
On behalf of the authors
Francesco Chini
3rd Reviewer: Lisa Lix

Minor Essential Revisions:
On page 6, please explain the "svyset" and "svytab" functions and what these functions do.
*We provided further details as requested by the reviewer*

On page 7 in the Results section, the authors describe the agreement between the administrative data and other sources. However, there is no indication in the Methods section of how agreement is quantified. For example, is a 10% difference between data sources considered a small difference, indicating low agreement? I would urge the authors to revise the Results section to make this clearer.

*We agree with the reviewer that the agreement was not clearly defined. We have added a column in table 3 showing the relative difference (in percentage) between estimates form pharmacy data and those obtained using other sources. In the note of the table we have also added the formula used for calculation. We revised the results section on the basis of this new column and we specified that the cut-off for agreement was arbitrary and used only for a description of the results obtained.*

In the Limitations section, the authors note that false positives were people who used a drug for a chronic condition on an occasional basis. This statement requires some clarification. Why couldn't these be individuals who have a less severe form of the disease or for whom the disease is being managed by other means? In this case, the individuals would be true positives and not false positives.

*We revised the sentence as follows: “Another limit regards the potential inclusion of individuals without the specific CC evaluated who used the drug as incidental users or for other CCs not considered in this study.”*