Author's response to reviews

Title: Prevalence of low back pain and associated occupational factors among Chinese coal miners

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Version: 7 Date: 12 January 2012

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

Re: Prevalence of low back pain and occupational factors among the Chinese coal miners (your ref: 2029232423583042)

Thank you to give us further opportunity to improve our manuscript and three reviewers’ comments. In response to reviewers’ comments, we have made changes which are highlighted in the revised manuscript. The details are described below.

In response to Referee 1:

1. It is not a risk factor study and it is not possible to add knowledge on the aetiology of LBP in a cross-sectional study. Therefore, the following quotations are still problematic.
   “risk factors” changed to “associated factors”.

2. Furthermore, the authors still state that recall bias may be present because…..which should be mentioned in the discussion.
   Agreed. The statement, “The workers with pain perceive exposures to be more extreme or adverse than workers without pain”, was added in Page 8.

In response to Referee 2:

1. Table 1: The means and SDs of the LBP groups for age, seniority, and working hours clearly overlap. Those data are highly skewed. The median added in Table 1.

2. Table 2: There are no 95% Confidence Intervals around the OR estimates for Age for either univariate or multivariate regressions.
   ORs and 95%CIs for age groups added in Table 2.

3. When I calculate a p-value for the use of vibrating tools in the univariate analysis,
   I obtain a OR of 1.19 (95% CI 0.94, 1.51) with a p-value of 0.158 (Yates correction) or 0.142 (uncorrected). “The use of vibrating tools …” deleted in Result Section, Page 5.

In response to Referee 3:

1. Isn’t it confusing that physical activity, the main suspected risk-factor, is included in most preventive and therapeutic interventions targeting spinal disorders?
We do not support the view that physical activity, the main suspected risk-factor, is included in most preventive and therapeutic interventions targeting spinal disorders although physical activity may prevent spinal disorders.

2. In real life, most working and non-working people have had ‘discomfort or pain’ in the back, but why did 1/3 of subjects in the current study not report having back pain?

The prevalence of LBP was measured to be 64.9%, which is similar to other independent datasets (Zejda, Zhang, Limburska)

3. Why did they not analyze the underground miners and surface maintenance workers separately?

The results of separate analyses for underground miners and surface maintenance workers added in Page 5-6

Looking forward to your reply in due course.

Sincerely yours,