Author's response to reviews

Title: A qualitative exploration of Malaysian cancer patients' perceptions towards cancer screening

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

Thank you very much for considering my manuscript MS: 5332912288003497. I appreciate the useful comments of reviewers to help me improving the article. All authors have revised the manuscript and have made necessary changes to improve the quality of the manuscript for English-speaking audience. Below are my responses to the worthy concerns raised by the honorable reviewers:

EDITOR'S COMMENTS:

The authors should consider all reviewer comments to be major compulsory revisions, and should provide a point-by-point response showing how they have responded.

Response: All reviewers’ comments were noted and responded point-by-point.

In particular, the authors should expand the introduction to provide more background on the findings of other relevant studies (such as those which investigated cancer screening perceptions amongst healthy individuals).

Response: Introduction section has been edited and new references have been added.

Add information about opportunistic cancer screening in Malaysia.

Response: Added as suggested

The methods section needs clarification about the methodology followed (i.e. patient recruitment, how interviews were undertaken and who by, and how data were analysed).

Response: Edited as suggested

The discussion section also needs to be expanded to provide more interpretation of the themes uncovered through the interviews rather than simply focusing on describing what the themes were.

Response: The emergent themes are presented in the results section, however each theme is discussed under the discussion section and well supported by previously published studies.

Reviewer 1 has spent a lot of time highlighting grammatical errors or errors in expression which should be corrected. In addition to making these and other changes suggested by reviewer 1, I would recommend that the authors have the paper professionally copyedited for clarity in the English language, as there are currently many instances where the way that sentences are written detract from the overall message of the paper because it is too difficult to understand what they authors are attempting to convey.

Response: The manuscript was sent for proof reading. Please see the attached certificate.
1. Please change the title 'Conflict of Interest' to 'Competing Interest'.
Response: Changed as suggested

2. Acknowledgment: *We strongly encourage you to include an Acknowledgments section between the Authors’ contributions section and Reference list. Please acknowledge anyone who contributed towards the study by making substantial contributions to conception, design, acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data, or who was involved in drafting the manuscript or revising it critically for important intellectual content, but who does not meet the criteria for authorship. Please also include their source(s) of funding. Please also acknowledge anyone who contributed materials essential for the study. Authors should obtain permission to acknowledge from all those mentioned in the Acknowledgments.
Response: Added as suggested

3. Please remove the visible vertical lines of the Tables.
Response: Removed as suggested

Tables: Please ensure that the order in which your tables are cited is the same as the order in which they are provided. Every table must be cited in the text, using Arabic numerals. Please do not use ranges when listing tables. Tables must not be subdivided, or contain tables within tables. Please note that we are unable to display vertical lines or text within tables, no display merged cells: please re-layout your table without these elements. Tables should be formatted using the Table tool in your word processor. Please ensure the table title is above the table and the legend is below the table. For more information, see the instructions for authors on the journal website.
Response: Checked as suggested

4. Copyediting:
After reading through your manuscript, we feel that the quality of written English needs to be improved before the manuscript can be considered further. We advise you to have a professional editing service correct your language. Please ensure that particular attention is paid to the abstract.
Response: The manuscript was send for proof reading. Please see the attached certificate.
MAJOR COMPULSORY REVISIONS

The following are examples of the kinds of grammatical errors that appear throughout the paper.

Abstract
1. Results section line ‘awareness on cancer screening’ should read ‘awareness of cancer screening’.
2. Semi-colons should replace the commas between the four major themes identified.
3. Add ‘The’ to sentence beginning ‘Majority of the respondent and it should read ‘their diagnoses at end of same the sentence.
4. The following paragraph does not make sense as it stands ‘Some accounted of heeding mammogram.’ This needs rewording.
5. Add ‘the’ to phrase ‘including role of mass media’.
6. Conclusions paragraph - add in ‘of people’ in to phrase ‘personal experiences with cancer’.

Background
Again, there are a number of grammatical errors in the section that require attention:
1. Paragraph 1, sentence starting ‘The first NCR report.’ - does not make sense - needs rewriting.
2. Paragraph 1, sentence starting ‘However, taking into account’ - add replace ’as’ with ‘that’.
3. In same paragraph/sentence - add ‘may be’ between ‘Malaysian expected’.
4. Paragraph 1, sentence starting with ‘Lifestyle factors..’ - add ‘a’ into ‘consumption of high fat diet’
5. Paragraph 1, sentence starting ‘The incidence of cervical cancer’ add ‘the’ into ‘among leading causes’.
6. Paragraph 1, sentence starting ‘Colon cancer is reported…’ - add semi-colon between ‘worldwide, this’.
7. Last sentence in paragraph doesn’t make sense as it stands. It should read for example ‘Among Malaysians, the highest incidence of colon cancer is found in the Chinese population, followed by the Malay and Indian populations’.
8. Paragraph 2, second sentence - ‘the’ needs adding to sentence - i.e. ‘Cancers of the breast’ and ‘are among the few cancers’.
9. Paragraph 2, second sentence - rephrase sentence ‘when probability of a cure is high’.
10. Paragraph 2, sentence beginning ‘The most known’ - ‘most known’ should read ‘foremost’
11. In the sentence beginning ‘The Health Belief Model (HBM).’ - Remove ‘(HBM)’ as it has already been used as acronym I previous line.

Response: All the suggested changes have been made in the manuscript. At the same time manuscript was send for proof reading. Please see the attached certificate.

Further major compulsory revisions (these are generally related to content)

Background
1. Statement in paragraph 1, beginning with ‘this may be in part due to environmental concerns…’ requires a reference.

Response: Edited (The statement has been removed from the text)

2. Paragraph 2, second sentence - the authors need to say when free breast and cervical screening programmes were introduced in Malaysia.
Response: Added (1960….)

3 Paragraph 2 - relating to ‘four major constructs’ of HBM needs to be explicit about what these are, rather than saying that ‘the first two refer to disease’ etc…
Response: Added

4. References required for line 15-16 pp5 in terms of ‘studies have evaluated perceptions of health individual…’

Methods
Design and settings
1. This section would benefit from greater justification of utilising qualitative methods to answer the research questions.
Response: Added (Qualitative methods elaborate the understanding of how and why people behave as they do. In addition, these methods provide comprehensive answers to questions. The flexible nature of the exploration is advantageous to the researcher investigating barriers and to the facilitators inviting a particular response)

Participants
2. I am troubled by the use of the ‘participants were selected’ - surely they weren’t selected, but invited to participate.
Response: Changed as suggested

Study tool
References required for statement ‘interview guide was developed after extensive literature search’ as there are currently no references.
Response: Added ((Lasser, Ayanian, Fletcher, & Good, 2008; Markovic, Kesic, & Matejic, 2005).

Interview process and data evaluation
1. This section needs clarification. It is unclear who was actually undertaking the interviews. The authors mention that research assistants were employed to ‘help’ in the interview.
Response: The details are added in the text (Two research assistants of Indian and Malay ethnic backgrounds were trained to conduct the interviews. Chinese patients were interviewed either in the Malay or English languages by the same interviewers. Each interview lasted for about 30–60 minutes. The principal investigator attended all the interviews with the research assistants to take field notes and to facilitate the interview process.)

2. I am unclear as to the process of data analysis - it needs to be more explicit.
Response: Added

3. I am confused by the use of the anticipated themes that were ‘important to the researchers’ - surely the nature of qualitative research is to explore issues that are important to the participants.
Response: Removed and rephrased

4. Use of the ‘validity’ should replace the use of the term ‘trustworthiness’.
Results
1. Although the authors use quotations to support the emerging themes, there is only cursory interpretation of the responses. The section would benefit from more detailed interpretation of the responses.

Response: The interpretation of all emergent themes are discussed in discussion section and are supported by previously published data, thus the authors don’t find it necessary to interpret it in the result section.

2. The presentation of the results is confusing - for example, the statement ‘Male cancer patient who were aware of breast cancer screening, probably through television’, it is unclear if the researchers have made this assumption that it was ‘probably through television’ of if it is generated from the participant responses. This needs clarifying.

Response: Edited as suggested

Discussion
1. Again, this section requires substantial re-working. Paragraphs 3 and 4, for example, have a large number of grammatical errors, making it difficult to make sense of the points that the authors appear to be making. The section seems to be making claims that are not necessarily supported by the results reported in the results section.

Response: Edited as suggested

Limitations
The authors need to explain why patients with cancer may have different perceptions/knowledge of cancer screening to those without cancer. They raise the point that focusing upon patients with cancer is a limitation, but do not explain why this may be the case.

Response: Removed from the text

2. They report that the lack of generalisability of the study is a limitation. However, qualitative studies are exploratory in nature and do not seek generalisability, so this is not a limitation of these kind of study.

Response: Removed from the text

Conclusions
1. The authors state that the ‘small sample size was due to the qualitative approach of the study’ - this kind of statement should belong in the limitations section. Having said this it is not a limitation as small samples are common in qualitative research, so this statement should be omitted.

Response: Removed from the text
This section is not worded appropriately - it should ‘recommend’ possible changes to practice, rather it uses terms like ‘should be’ e.g. ‘New venues for carrying out regular cancer screening should be initiated.’ This needs to be addressed.

Response: Removed from the text
Abstract: In background section, Add the word cancer, in the statement stating that the response of screening is poor.

Response: Added

Methodology: In which Language consent form was used.

Response: Both in Malay and English languages. Those unable to read or write were given verbal consent.

For Chinese patients why not their native language was not used?

Response: Lack of funding did not allow us to appoint more than two research assistant.

In methodology section authors mention that there were many studies conducted for healthy individual concerning the perception towards the cancer screening I would like author should add some of important results from those studies in the introduction section.

Response: New references are added

Table 1 should be reformatted so that it would be clearly understandable for readers.

Response: Changed

Explain the term used "Slightly advance stage of cancer".

Response: We couldn’t find this term in the text.

Results: Table 2 represent the socio-economic status of the study participant as the income was the only criteria, I advise this variable should be only economic status rather socio-economic.

Response: Since the term Socio economic is widely used in previously published studies, we would suggest keeping it in its current form.

Add citation for the division of income groups.

Response: The division of income groups was adapted from previously published study (Please check reference No 31)

Opportunistic screening program in Malaysia as mention is the discussion section please add some information about this in introduction section.

Response: Added as suggested

As the study targeted only low and middle income groups and didn’t target the high income group, mention this as a limitation of the study.

Response: We did not specifically target the low to middle income groups only, it just happened to be in this way, thus we don’t think it can be a limitation.

Limitation section should come after the conclusion section.

Response: Limitation section has been removed from the text
• Please check reference number 6, 10, 12, 13, 25, 28.

**Response:** Checked and edited
Reviewer#3
Harith HAQ Qazaz

Introduction:
• I advise the authors to add some information about that what is already known to the cancer screening concerning Malaysian population.
Response: Added as suggested

• Authors have presented quite the detail of the HBM, I feel it is not necessary to add such detail here, authors should curtail some of the unnecessary information provided.
Response: Edited, however; HBM reference is needed to support the discussion based on HBM and patients’ screening behavior.

Methodology:
• But one concern that why the patients with high income not taken in to the consideration of the study.
Response: We did not specifically target the low to middle income groups only, it just happened to be in this way.

Reference: Some of the references are not complete.
Response: All references were checked and edited