Author’s response to reviews

Title: Socio-Epidemiological Features of 2002 Plague Outbreak in Himachal Pradesh, India

Authors:

Sonu Goel (sonugoel007@gmail.com)
Harvinder Kaur (harvinderkaur315@gmail.com)
A K Gupta (anil1031@hotmail.com)
Umesh S Chauhan (uschauhan78@gmail.com)
Amarjeet Singh (amarminhas56@rediffmail.com)

Version: 3  Date: 20 January 2014

Author’s response to reviews: see over
The Editor, Journal Editorial Office

Biomedical Central

Subject: Response to comments to article MS: 1891864883917771. Socio-Epidemiological Features of 2002 Plague Outbreak in Himachal Pradesh, India authored Sonu Goel, Harvinder Kaur, A K Gupta, Umesh S Chauhan and Amarjeet Singh

Dear Editor,

We thank the reviewers for useful comments on the article. We think that the article has been improved after incorporation of their suggestions. We are providing comment wise responses as under:

Reply to the reviewers’ comments

Comment-1: This is an interesting study on an important topic. However, the study methods and the presentation of the results are not satisfactory. Firstly, the study design is unclear. I assume that this was an exclusive qualitative study, but I don't understand how many people were interviewed.

Response-1: We thank the reviewer for encouraging comments. We have revised the study methods in the article (please see page-2 para-3 till Page-3). We have now categorically stated now that it is a qualitative study and also stated number of IDI and FGD along with details of data collection and analysis.

Comment-2: The issues covered by the questionnaire were also neglected. The presentation of the results is rather cryptic, since the authors report that the villagers told a story about contact between people and animals ('plague reservoirs) but also that this story was not true. Who did say the right thing? who was interviewed and which was considered to be the 'gold standard'. I feel that the paper cannot be accepted in this version but it should be rewritten to make it more clear and then resubmitted and reevaluated.

Response-2: The issues covered by questionnaire have now been described under method section. The knowledge and opinion of wide stakeholders on the etiology, proneness, sustenance, spread, control and prevention of plague was explored along with on-guard measures adopted by them for plague. The hunting behavior of villagers and the extent of non-vegetarian consumption pattern of the local people have also been noted especially in snowfall days when getting regular food is difficult. A lifestyle profile
of natives of affected villages has also been created. Their opinion on repeated occurrence of plague in their area, role of other factors especially rats in spread of plague, type and pattern of disease, local terminologies for plague, treatment seeking behavior, changes in health seeking behavior after 2002 outbreak etc were also catalogued.

The presentation of results has now been categorized into four themes and views of participants about them were explored. There were few findings where consensus couldn’t be reached despite repeated attempts. Therefore, it has been listed under limitations in end of the manuscript

**Dr. Sonu Goel (Corresponding Author)**
Assistant Professor of Health Management
School of Public Health, Department of Community Medicine (PGIMER), Chandigarh, India
Phone: +91-172-2755215, 09914208490, 9914208027,
Email: sonugoel007@yahoo.co.in