Author's response to reviews

Title: Human Papillomavirus-related Psychosocial Impact of patients with Genital Warts in China: A Hospital-based Cross-sectional Study

Authors:

Shu-Zhen Qi (qisz@ncstdlc.org)
Shao-Ming Wang (wangshaoming@cicams.ac.cn)
Ju-Fang Shi (shijf@cicams.ac.cn)
Qian-Qiu Wang (wangqq@ncstdlc.org)
Xiang-Sheng Chen (chenxs@ncstdlc.org)
Li-Jun Sun (sunlijunkity@sohu.com)
An Liu (liuan75@163.com)
Nanci Zhang (nancizhang@gmail.com)
Ning Jiang (jiangn@ncstdlc.org)
Priya Sivasubramaniam (priyagsiva@gmail.com)
Xiu-Lian Xu (xulqjil@sina.com)
You-Lin Qiao (qiaoy@cicams.ac.cn)

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

Thank you very much for your letter and the accompanying reviewers’ comments on our paper (MS: 3178.442481240047). We are submitting a revised manuscript that incorporates the reviewers’ comments. A point-by-point response is attached.

We hope that our paper has been revised satisfactorily and will be published in BMC Public Health.
We look forward to your response.

Cordially yours,

Prof. You-Lin Qiao, M.D.; Ph.D.,
Director, Dept. of Cancer Epidemiology, Cancer Institute/Hospital,
Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences & Peking Union Medical College
17 South Panjiayuan Lane, P.O. Box 2258, Beijing 100021, China
Email: qiaoy@cicams.ac.cn
Tel: 86-10-8778-8489;
Fax: 86-10-6771-3648

Attachment:  Point-by-point response to the reviewer’s comments

Reviewer Comments:

Reviewer 1#
1. Line 144-146 “The HIP questionnaire has been demonstrated to have favorable reliability, construct validity, and ability to discriminate among varying degrees of disease severity”, please provide reference

RE: Thanks for this reviewer’s suggestion. We have added the relevant reference in the paper on line 144-146.

2. Line 222-223, “Our results showed that patients with GW had a substantially higher psychosocial burden than general population”, as the study did not set general population as a control group, better to described as “Our results showed that patients with GW had
substantially psychological problem"

RE: We have revised the sentence per the reviewer’s suggestion. Please find the following revision on line 222-223:” Our results showed that patients with GW had a substantially higher psychosocial burden.”

3. Line 257, “Generally, we found that the psychosocial burden of Chinese patients with GW was heavy, with the HIP mean score of 50.49, 49.20 and 51.38 for general population, males, and females, respectively”, this is not right. 50.49 is the total HIP (male and female patients), but not the results for general population, please correct.

RE: We have revised the sentence per the reviewer’s suggestion with the following revision on line 257: “Generally, we found that the psychosocial burden of Chinese patients with GW was heavy, with the HIP mean score of 50.49, 49.20 and 51.38 for GW patients in total, male patients, and female patients, respectively.”

Reviewer 2#
Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)
1. The authors describe tiered levels of medical workers in this population. It would be good to know in the introduction what types of medical providers were working with the study sample. An overview of a routine clinical visit would also be an interesting addition (e.g. how long do visits last, what type of medical providers are involved, how far do patients usually travel to get to medical appointments?)

RE: Thanks for the reviewer’s suggestion. There are tiered levels of medical workers in China, including the provincial, municipal, county, and village levels. This study was conducted in the provincial hospital. We have added this in the introduction with the following revision:” Therefore, in order to address the HPV-related psychosocial burden of patients with GW for both genders, we conducted a hospital-based study in the provincial hospital of Beijing and Nanjing of China.” We also added more information of the routine clinical visit in the method section with the following revision: “It usually took half an hour to finish the visit by a deputy chief physician or 15-20 minutes by an attending doctor.”

• Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
2. On line 223 the authors assert that “patients with GW has a substantially higher psychosocial burden than the general population.” This is repeated in the conclusions. However, no information re: “psychosocial burden” in the general population is presented. I
do not think that the data presented in this paper supports that claim, as the general population is not included in the sample. However, I think that this assertion could be deleted from the paper and it would still represent a unique contribution to the literature.

RE: Thanks for the reviewer’s thoughtful consideration. We agree with the reviewer that the “psychosocial burden” of the general population was not investigated in this paper and deleted the relevant sentences in the paper accordingly.

• Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

3. Beginning on line 325, the authors describe prophylactic HPV vaccination as a suggested mechanism for alleviation of psychosocial burden. This is the first time HPV vaccination is mentioned in the paper, and nothing about the study data is presented in a way that supports this claim. For example, there is no data in the paper about the acceptability of HPV vaccination in this population. While HPV vaccine might serve to alleviate psychosocial burden in the future, I do not believe it is a claim that can be made as an outcome of this particular study. This is even more concerning given that the study was funded by Merck Sharp & Dohme Ltd. I would suggest deleting this paragraph from this manuscript.

RE: Thanks for the reviewer’s suggestion. We agree with the reviewer that we didn’t present any data regarding the efficacy or acceptability of quadrivalent HPV vaccine. Although we hope the vaccine could provide additional potential benefit for preventing the accompanied psychosocial impact of GW, evidence was lacked to support this assertion. Therefore, we deleted the whole paragraph per reviewer’s suggestion.

4. We recommend that you copy edit the paper to improve the style of written English.

RE: Thanks for the reviewer’s suggestion. Our co-authors, Priya Siva and Nanci Zhang, are native English speakers from US, and they helped improve the style of written English.