Author's response to reviews

Title: Socioeconomic differentials in premature mortality in Rome: changes from 1990 to 2001

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The attached manuscript is submitted for a possible publication after revision.

We thank both reviewers for their useful comments.

Dana Jaffe

1. It is true, the study is a continuation of a previous research (Michelozzi et al.), but we preferred to use different age groups for several reasons:
   - 1991 population data have as oldest age group the 75+. This means that if we consider not only premature mortality, but all-age mortality, we do not have the possibility to take account of age distribution in elderly.
   - Many international papers were produced analysing premature mortality (Davey Smith et al.) or mortality in these age groups (Huisman et al.), thus we were interested to see whether our results were similar.
   - We also preferred to use the 20-44 instead of 15-44 to concentrate on adult mortality, thinking of further investigations for teen-agers’ and children’s mortality.

2. Now we explained in the method and in the discussion sections that unfortunately, nor Regional Registry of Causes of Death data nor population data contain individual socioeconomic position indicators. For this reason we used a small area index related to census block of residence.

3. Although a formal test for trend would have been nice, it should be noted that in this case we are comparing rate ratios (not rates) across time categories. It is difficult then to test the specific form of the effect modification when evaluating the interaction.

SV Subramanian

We rewrote the discussion and tried to develop the four suggested points.

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Looking forward to receiving news.
Best regards
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