Author's response to reviews

Title: Psychosocial and other Working Conditions in Relation to Body Mass Index in a Representative Sample of Australian Workers

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Dear Editor:

We have responded to the two reviewers final comments on our paper as follows:

Reviewer #2:

Was concerned that we state in the abstract that BMI was measured using self-reports. The following sentence has been added to the abstract. "Information on body mass index was self-reported as were psychosocial work conditions assessed using the demand/control and effort/reward imbalance models."

Reviewer Two was also concerned that we stipulate clearly how we created our high and low effort and reward scales. The following sentence was added into the methods section and now explains this clearly. "The effort and reward scales were dichotomized at the median to create two variables measuring high and low effort and high and low reward."

Reviewer #3:

Was concerned that we properly integrated the findings of our study with the current literature. The following paragraphs have been added to the discussion to handle these concerns.

"Studies of psychosocial working conditions and BMI have demonstrated an association between high job strain [13], low control [13, 24], and high ERI [13], "pressures on the job" [22], a proxy measure of participation and control [4], and a borderline association between high psychological demand and BMI [27]. These results indicate that demands, control, or some combination of these may be associated with increased BMI but clear results from this small number, of largely cross-sectional studies, do not emerge.

The results from our study suggest that "demand" rather than "control" factors may be more salient in relation to BMI, at least for men. After fully controlling for confounding, two workload-related factors, psychological demand (from the DC model) and working long hours were both strongly associated with BMI. As well, in univariate models high effort was associated with BMI. Given that high effort combines measures of physical and psychological demand into a single variable, and given that high physical demand is negatively associated with BMI and high psychological demand with increased BMI, the effects of one may cancel the effects of the other, at least in relation to BMI."