2 June 2007
Dr Lolu da-Silva
Assistant Editor
BMC-series Journals
BioMed Central
Re: MS: 1995616612104954 (BioMed Central Public Health)
Quality of life of Lithuanian women with early stage breast cancer.

Dear Dr. Lolu da Silva:

My co-authors and I were pleased to receive your letter.

In response to your recommendation we have made the following editions to the paper:

We have deleted the definite article “The” in the sentence ¹The Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, The Institute of Oncology, Vilnius University, Vilnius, Lithuania, ²The Department of Breast Surgery and Oncology, The Institute of Oncology, Vilnius University, Vilnius, Lithuania on page 1.

We have changed the sentence There have not been any studies carried out in the last decades in Lithuania on the quality of life of patients with breast cancer to the sentence: “In the last decades, there have been no studies carried out in Lithuania on the quality of life of breast cancer patients” on page 2.

We have changed the sentence Thus the aim of the present study was to evaluate the changes of the quality of life of Lithuanian women with the early stage of breast cancer in the period of nine months after the surgery and its dependence on the surgical strategy, the adjuvant chemotherapy and the social and demographic status of the patients to the sentence: “The aim of the present study was to evaluate changes in the quality of life of Lithuanian women with the early stage of breast cancer nine months after surgery and its dependence on surgical strategy, adjuvant chemotherapy and the social and demographic status of the patients” on page 2.

We have changed the sentence 77 patients with early stage breast cancer completed twice the FACT-An questionnaire: one week after the surgery and nine months after the surgery to the sentence: “Seventy-seven patients with early stage breast cancer filled in the FACT-An questionnaire twice: one week and nine months after the surgery” on page 2.
We have changed the sentence *The patients underwent the surgery: mastectomy or breast conserving treatment (BCT) with/without chemotherapy* to the sentence: “We distinguished the mastectomy group and breast conserving treatment (BCT) group with/without chemotherapy” on page 2.

We have changed the sentence *Changes in the quality of life in different groups in the period of nine months after the surgery were compared* to the sentence: “Changes in the quality of life in these groups were compared nine months after surgery” on page 2.

We have changed the sentence *In the period of nine months after the surgery, the overall quality of life became worse in the both mastectomy and BCT groups* to the sentence: “Nine months after surgery, the overall quality of life was found worse in both mastectomy and BCT groups” on page 2.

We have changed the sentence *The changes appeared due to the worsening of the emotional and social well-being* to the sentence: “Changes were induced by the worsening of the emotional and social well-being” on page 2.

We have changed the sentence *In the groups of mastectomy with/without chemotherapy and BCT with/without chemotherapy, the quality of life became worse in the mastectomy with chemotherapy sample* to the sentence: “The quality of life became worse in the mastectomy plus chemotherapy sample” on page 2.

We have changed the sentence *The quality of life changes were not detected at all in the mastectomy without chemotherapy group* to the sentence: “No changes were detected in the mastectomy group without chemotherapy” on page 2.

We have changed the sentence *In addition, the multivariate analysis showed that the marital status became quite a significant determinant in the changes of their functional well-being* to the sentence: “In addition, the multivariate analysis showed
that the marital status was quite a significant determinant of the functional well-being” on page 2.

We have changed the sentence *The study revealed the worsening of the overall quality of life in both of the research groups of the patients: those who were undergoing mastectomy and BCT, in the period of nine months after the surgery* to the sentence: “Nine months after surgery, the study revealed a worsening of the overall quality of life in both groups of patients - those who had undergone mastectomy and BCT” on page 2.

We have changed the sentence *After having compared mastectomy with/without chemotherapy and BCT with/without chemotherapy groups, it was established that the quality of life became considerably worse in mastectomy with chemotherapy group in nine months period after the surgery* to the sentence: “The quality of life became considerably worse in the mastectomy plus chemotherapy group” on page 2.

We have changed the sentence *Marital status in comparison with other social and demographic factors considerably influenced the changes in Lithuanian women’s quality of life in the period of nine months after surgery* to the sentence: “Marital status was found to exert the most considerable influence on the women’s quality of life in comparison with other social and demographic factors” on page 3.

We have changed the sentence *Numerous studies on the quality of life of breast cancer patients which have been carried out in the last decades has got too limited data on the psychosocial aspects of the transitional period between the primary treatment and survivorship (1)* to the sentence: “Numerous studies on the quality of life of breast cancer patients, carried out in the last decades, presented rather scarce data on the psychosocial aspects of the transitional period between the primary treatment and survival (1)” on page 3.

We have replaced the word "of" with words "caused by" in the sentence: *The first year is most stressful because of the adaptation to the impact of the diagnosis, treatment and anxiety caused by the follow-up visits and tests (2)* on page 3.
We have changed the sentence *Literature review (3) showed that the women's psychological vulnerability and adaptation after mastectomy and breast conserving treatment (BCT) insignificantly differ, except the body image, which is better after BCT* to the sentence: “A review of the literature (3) has shown that the women’s psychological vulnerability and adaptation after mastectomy and breast conserving treatment (BCT) differ insignificantly, except the body image, which is better after BCT” on page 3.

We have changed the sentence *The later 5-year duration study (4) showed that although some quality of life domains became better after BCT than after mastectomy, the obtained results showed the direct link of dependence upon the patients’ age and other sociodemographic factors* to the sentence: “A later 5-year prospective study (4) has shown that although some quality of life domains became better after BCT than after mastectomy, there was a direct relation to the patients’ age and other sociodemographic factors” on page 3.

We have changed the sentence *The researches pointed out the importance of influence of chemotherapy on the quality of life after treating surgically breast cancer (1, 5)* to the sentence: “Studies have pointed out the importance of chemotherapy for the quality of life after the surgical treatment of breast cancer (1, 5)” on page 3.

We have changed the sentence *Chemotherapy at 0-II stages of breast cancer lowered the quality of life scores overall across four dimensions with a disproportionately greater impact on those with lower level of education (5)* to the sentence: “Chemotherapy in breast cancer 0-II stages lowered the quality of life scores overall across the four dimensions with a disproportionately greater impact on women with lower level of education (5)” on page 3.

We have changed the sentence *Additional troublesome effects are hair loss, weight gain and problems with concentration* to the sentence: “Additional troublesome effects are hair loss, weight gain and concentration problems” on page 4.
We have changed the sentence *One more symptom that can in particular continue to distress patients long after the treatment was completed is fatigue (6)* to the sentence: “One more distressing symptom that can last particularly long after the treatment is fatigue (6)” on page 4.

We have deleted the definite article “The” in the sentence *The Anemia Subscale of the Functional Assessment of Cancer Therapy (FACT-An) is able to capture physical and psychological aspects of the fatigue (7)* on page 4.

We have changed the sentence *The aim of our study was to evaluate the changes of the quality of life of Lithuanian women with the early stage of breast cancer in the period of nine months after the surgery and its dependence on the surgical strategy, the adjuvant chemotherapy and the social and demographic status* to the sentence: “The Anemia Subscale of the Functional Assessment of Cancer Therapy (FACT-An) is able to capture the physical and psychological aspects of fatigue (7)” on page 4.

We have deleted the indefinite article “a” in the sentence *This study is a part of extended prospective longitudinal study on the early stage breast cancer patients* in the sentence and added an article “an” in the same sentence on page 4.

We have changed the sentence *All women signed up the informed consent approved by the Lithuanian Committee of Bioethics* to the sentence: “All women signed an informed consent form approved by the Lithuanian Bioethics Committee” on page 4.

We have replaced the words "The data about" with the words "Data on" in the sentence “*The data about the patients’ diagnosis, treatment and age were taken from the patients’ records*” on page 4.

We have deleted the definite article “The” in the sentence “*The responses were received from 77 (66%) patients*” on page 5.

We have deleted the definite article “The” in the sentence “*The patients who did not send the written answers were contacted by phone to find out the reasons*” on page 5.
We have replaced the indefinite article “a” with the definite article “the” in the sentence The most frequent explanation was: “because I felt bad” or “I didn’t understand some questions”; the other reasons were: “at that time I was away” or “I didn’t get the mail” on page 5.

We have added the indefinite article “a” to the sentence: “Only a few were traced to have changed their address or phone number” on page 5.

We have replaced the words "is comprised from" with the word "comprises" in the sentence: “Each domain is comprised from six to seven questions scored by the use of a Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 4 (very much)” on page 5.

We have added “in” to the sentence: “The FACT-An includes 13 items that attempt to identify the intensity of fatigue experienced during the 7-day period before the questionnaire administration, plus seven additional items (20 in total) pertaining to symptoms associated with anemic processes (7)” on page 5.

We have added the definite article “the” to the sentence “The Total FACT-An score is a sum of four subscales plus the Anemia subscale” on page 5.

We have added the definite article “the” to the sentence “The Trial Outcome Index (TOI) is a sum of PWB, FWB and Anemia subscales” on page 5.

We have changed the sentence And the changes in the quality of life in different groups after nine months passing the surgery were compared to the sentence: “Changes in the quality of life in different groups nine months following surgery were compared” on page 5.

We have added the definite article “the” to the sentence: “The t-test for dependent samples was used to compare the main score values for the QOL domains” on page 5.

We have added the definite article “the” to the sentence: “The t-test for dependent samples was used to compare the main score values for the QOL domains” on page 5.

We have added the indefinite article “a” to the sentence: “Multivariate analysis was performed to identify predictors for a poor QOL during the follow up” on page 6.
We have replaced the word "main" with the word "mean" in the sentence: “The mean age of patients was 53.1 ± 10.6 years (range 32 – 78)” on page 6.

We have changed the sentence Nine months after the surgery overall quality of life (Total FACT-G) scores and Total FACT-An scores show the decrease in both mastectomy and BCT groups (Table 2) to the sentence: “Nine months after surgery, the overall quality of life (Total FACT-G) scores and Total FACT-An scores showed a decrease in both mastectomy and BCT groups (Table 2)” on page 6.

We have changed the sentence Social Well-Being (SWB) scores show the decrease in mastectomy group, Social Well-Being and Emotional Well-Being (EWB) scores - in BCT group to the sentence: “The social well-being (SWB) scores showed a decrease in the mastectomy group, and the social well-being and emotional well-being (EWB) scores became lower in the BCT group” on page 6.

We have changed the sentence In mastectomy without chemotherapy group QOL scores remained the same as in one week after the surgery to the sentence: “In the mastectomy group without chemotherapy, the QOL scores remained the same as one week after surgery” on page 7.

We have replaced the words "show the decrease" with the words "showed a decrease" in the sentence: “In the BCT with chemotherapy group, SWB, EWB, Total FACT-G and Total FACT-An scores showed a decrease” on page 8.

We have changed the sentence In the BCT without chemotherapy group only SWB scores show the significant decrease (Table 2) to the sentence: “In the group BCT without chemotherapy, only SWB scores showed a significant decrease (Table 2)” on page 8.

We have changed the sentence All the patients show SWB, EWB, FACT-An, Total FACT-G and Total FACT-An scores significant decrease over time (Table 2) to the
sentence: “In all the patients, the SWB, EWB, FACT-An, Total FACT-G and Total FACT-An scores decreased significantly over time (Table 2) on page 8.

We have changed the sentence *These findings point out the worsening of QOL, which has been conditioned by the worsening in emotional and social well-being domains* to the sentence: “These findings indicate a worsening of QOL, as a result of the worsening in the emotional and social well-being domains” on page 8.

We have changed the sentence *Multivariate regressive analysis shows the marital status to be a significant determinant in the changes of QOL functional well-being domain* to the sentence: “Multivariate regressive analysis shows the marital status to be a significant determinant of changes in the functional well-being domain of QOL” on page 8.

We have added the word “statistically” to the Table 3.

We have changed the sentence *In the group of married women SWB, FACT-An, Total FACT-G, Total FACT-An and TOI-Anemia scores show significant decrease nine months after the surgery (Figure 1)* to the sentence: “In the group of married women, the SWB, FACT-An, Total FACT-G, Total FACT-An and TOI-Anemia scores showed a significant decrease nine months after surgery (Figure 1)” on page 9.

We have added the definite article “the” to the sentence: “The respondents’ marital status had no significant influence on their participation in the second interview” on page 9.

We have changed the sentence *Some specific study limitations appeared to be in the differences between those who completed questionnaires nine months after surgery and those who did not* to the sentence: “Some specific study limitations were the lack of data about QOL of those who did not respond to the questionnaires” on page 9.

We have changed the sentence *Besides, the patients participating the first time answered the questionnaires in the hospital surrounding and the second time at home and this might have influenced their answers* to the sentence: “Besides, the patients
answered the questionnaires for the first time in the hospital and the second time at home, and this might have influenced their answers” on page 9.

We have replaced the word "this" with the word "the" in the sentence: “The second limitation of the study was a small number of patients, who were divided into four groups: mastectomy with/without chemotherapy and BCT with/without chemotherapy” on page 9.

We have changed the sentence Our study also showed that the overall quality of life has worsened significantly nine months after the surgery in the both of the patients’ groups: of those undergoing mastectomy and BCT to the sentence: “Our study showed that the overall quality of life nine months after surgery worsened significantly in all the patients’ - those undergoing mastectomy and BCT” on page 9.

We have changed the sentence The worsening was mostly caused by the social well-being in both groups and emotional well-being in BCT group to the sentence: “The worsening was caused mostly by the lowered social well-being scores in both groups and the lower emotional well-being in the BCT group” on page 9.

We have changed the sentence Any significant changes in patients’ physical well-being nine months after surgery weren’t detected to the sentence: “No significant changes were detected in the patients’ physical well-being nine months after surgery” on page 9.

We have changed the sentence Though some of the researches pointed out that social and emotional well-being are not changing too quickly or dramatically over time or in response to physical health interventions (11), our study shows that social and emotional well-being subscales turned out sensitively to reflect the changes in the patients’ quality of life after the surgery and chemotherapy to the sentence: “Although some authors pointed out that the social and emotional well-being shows no rapid or dramatic changes over time or in response to physical health interventions (11), in our study the social and emotional well-being subscales were rather sensitive to reflect changes in the patients’ quality of life after surgery and chemotherapy” on page 9.
We have changed the sentence *One of the possible explanations of the QOL worsening in social domain in nine months after the performed surgery was the changing role of the women in the family due to their illness or treatment* to the sentence: “One of the possible reasons for the QOL worsening the social domain nine months after surgery might be the changed role of the women in their family after the illness or treatment” on page 9.

We have changed the sentence *It was also found out that QOL was significantly influenced by the patients’ marital status, more than any other social and demographic variables including patients’ age, education and occupation (Table 3)* to the sentence: “Their QOL was significantly influenced also by the marital status, more than by any other social and demographic variables including age, education and occupation (Table 3)” on page 9.

We have replaced the words “results on QOL” with the words “data on the QOL” in the sentence: “These data on the QOL of Lithuanian women with early stage breast cancer differed from the findings of other researchers (4, 5)” on page 9.

We have changed the sentence *The declining of the quality of life in BCT group in the emotional and social domains confirmed the suggestion, that women treated with breast conservation often perceive themselves as the ones who receive less emotional support than the ones who undergo mastectomy (3, 6)* with the sentence: “The declining quality of life in the BCT group in the emotional and social domains confirmed the suggestion that women treated with breast conservation often perceive themselves as receiving less emotional support than those who underwent mastectomy (3, 6)” on page 10.

We have changed the sentence *The high quality life of the patients in the group of the mastectomy without chemotherapy showed good adaptation possibilities of this patients’ group* to the sentence: “The high quality life in the group of the mastectomy without chemotherapy showed the high adaptation possibilities of these patients” on page 10.
We have added the word “to” to the sentence: “In our study, statistically significant (p < 0.05) changes in QOL scores corresponded to the minimally important differences (MID) for scores of selected FACT scales and subscales (9, 10, 11): 2 points for EWB (12, 13), 2 - 3 points for FWB (12), 3 - 7 points for Total FACT-G (12, 14 - 16), 6 points for TOI-Anemia and 7 points for Total FACT-An (14)” on page 10.

We have changed the sentence The overall quality of life declined in nine months after the surgery in both of the patients’ groups: who were undergoing mastectomy and BCT (social well-being worsened in mastectomy sample, social and emotional well-being worsened in BCT sample) to the sentence: “The overall quality of life declined nine months after surgery in both groups of patients - those after mastectomy and after BCT: social well-being worsened in the mastectomy sample, while the social and emotional well-being worsened in the BCT sample” on page 11.

We have changed the sentence It was established that in the period of nine months after the surgery, the quality of life (SWB, EWB, FWB, FACT-An TOI, Total FACT-G, Total FACT-An and FACT-An scores) worsened most of all in mastectomy with chemotherapy group to the sentence: “Nine months after surgery, the quality of life (SWB, EWB, FWB, FACT-An TOI, Total FACT-G, Total FACT-An and FACT-An scores) was the worst in mastectomy plus chemotherapy group” on page 11.

We have changed the sentence No change in the quality of life was found among the patients after mastectomy without chemotherapy: in the period of nine months after the surgery the quality of life scores remained the same to the sentence: “No change in the quality of life was found among the patients after mastectomy without chemotherapy: nine months after surgery the quality of life scores remained the same” on page 11.

We have changed the sentence Marital status more than other social and demographic factors influenced the changes in the quality of life of Lithuanian women in the nine months after the surgery to the sentence: “Marital status, more than the
other social and demographic factors, has been found to influence changes in the quality of life of Lithuanian women nine months after surgery.” on page 11.

We have added the indefinite article “a” to the sentence: “Coordinated the study and provided a critical review of the manuscript” on page 11.

We have added the word “have” to the sentence: ”All the authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript” on page 12.

We have changed the sentence Special thanks to R. Jonusauskaite for the processed data to the sentence: “Special thanks belong to R. Jonusauskaite for processing the data” on page 11.

Thank you again for your interest in our manuscript.

Sincerely,

Giedre Bulotiene, MD
Institute of Oncology,
Vilnius University
Lithuania