Author's response to reviews

Title: Household disaster preparedness and information sources: Rapid cluster survey after a storm in New South Wales, Australia

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Responses to Reviewers’ comments

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Reviewer 1: Josephine Malilay

Reviewer’s report:
Overall comment. Sound, well-executed work.
Minor essential revisions. Pages 10-11. Instead of "Table 2," did you mean "Figure 6?"
There are no tables at all in the attached copy for review.

Thank you for noting this error. We have revised the text to read Figure 6 instead of Table 2.

Discretionary revisions. To improve the article and expand the usefulness of the results, I suggest addressing specific public health-related issues in emergency and disaster preparedness and response, particularly for future work in this area. A suggested list follows:

- Emergency supplies: Status of prescription medications for X days among household members
- Evacuation of 6000 families: Existence of household emergency plans
- Household demographics: Identification of vulnerable subgroups in household, e.g., elderly, young children, chronically ill persons with special needs
- Lack of water: Awareness of boil water orders, knowledge of household water disinfection techniques
- Electricity interruption/use of gas barbeques, portable stoves: Knowledge of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning with improper use of stoves, awareness of CO detectors
- Flooding in houses: Problems with indoor air quality and mold.

We note the reviewer’s comment with interest, and agree that it would have been useful to gather information on these topics. Unfortunately none of these topics were included in our survey, and so we are unable to comment on these topics as part of our survey findings. We have included a sentence in the Discussion, noting that these topics may be of interest in future surveys of this type. This sentence reads (pg 13, first paragraph):

“Our survey did not explore all aspects of household disaster preparedness. Future surveys of this type could explore issues relating to vulnerable sub-groups such as young children and those with chronic illness, and could further explore general household preparedness including: household supplies of prescription medication,
appropriateness of household emergency plans, and knowledge of techniques for disinfection of water.”

Reviewer 2: Kristine M Gebbie

Reviewer's report:
This is a very useful study, particularly because data were gathered so quickly after the event. I have identified no major compulsory revisions, and no minor essential revisions. I believe you could reduce the amount of narrative about findings by referring to the figures, which are very clear, but that is a discretionary revision.

Thank you for these comments. We have revised three sentences in the Results section, to reduce narrative where the information is already contained in the Figures.