Author's response to reviews

Title: Socio-economic class, rurality and risk of cutaneous melanoma by site and gender in Sweden.

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear editor

In this cover letter we include a point-by-point response to the reviewers’ comments and suggestions. We are sending also a revised manuscript addressing the reviewer 4 comments, which also complies BMC checklist format.

We hope that this revised manuscript can be considered acceptable for its publication in your journal.

Yours sincerely

Reviewer’s report
Title: Socio-economic class, rurality and risk of cutaneous melanoma by site and gender in Sweden.
Version: 2 Date: 30 October 2007
Reviewer: Adele Green

Reviewer’s report:

General

Thanks to authors for their responses which have clarified the research questions and several other issues including the use of occupational sector as reasonable proxy for socio-economic class.

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

1. Some comment regarding the stability of occupational sector and town size of residence over the follow-up period after 1970 needs to be made in the paper itself (as per the response) irrespective of the observed results for head and neck or the assumed latent period of the disease (which is likely to differ by site).

Response:

As the reviewer suggests, we have included in the text information about the stability of occupational sector and town size of residence. This information was already provided in our previous answer, but we agree that it is useful for potential readers to consider it inside the paper.

2. The results for men are still described in both the Abstract and Results as showing a socio-economic class gradient when this is not the case [as per original review, there is a dichotomy in levels of risk (0-III) vs (IV-VIII)]. Also it seems to be inferred in the paper that this occupational sector classification is a hierarchy, so why service jobs classed at IX should be proposed as being in an intermediate socio-economic position in men is not clear.

Response:

We have rewritten these sentences, stating the afore mentioned dichotomy. We have also explained in the text that Sector IX (Services) includes in men an heterogeneous group of occupations, such as civilian protective service workers –policemen, fire-fighters, …-, members of the armed forces and building caretakers. Thus, they cannot be easily ascribed to white or blue collar groups. In contrast, most women within service sector are kitchen maids, nursemiaids, housekeeping service workers or cleaners, which can be considered jobs of low socioeconomic status. This information has also been added to the text.

While the occupational sector classification has a certain hierarchy, this classification is not equivalent to a social class hierarchical scale, with sector IX being the best example for this.

3. Moreover there is heterogeneity between sites which is not mentioned for men (or women – see below). Please clarify in the paper. The noteworthy results of the assessment in women of the association of socio-economic class with sites of melanoma other than head and neck are neither remarked upon in Results or Abstract nor discussed in the Discussion section, when they should be explicit.
Response:

Following the reviewer advice, we have detailed in the manuscript the most noteworthy results for site analyses in both men and women. These data have been explicitly included in the abstract, result, and discussion sections as suggested.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

4. In the first line of Abstract, “site” should be removed, since cutaneous melanoma is not a site, and in any event the term “site” is reserved for anatomic site in the title and rest of paper.

Response: We have followed the reviewer advice

5. “Trunk” should replace “thorax” throughout the paper, as the latter term is not used in this context.

Response: The mistake indicated by the reviewer has been corrected.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest
Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.
Declaration of competing interests: I declare that I have no competing interests