Author's response to reviews

Title: Socio-demographic, health-related and psychosocial correlates of fear of falling and avoidance of activity in community-living older persons who avoid activity due to fear of falling

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editors,

Thanks you very much for the opportunity to revise and resubmit our paper ‘Socio-demographic, health-related and psychosocial correlates of fear of falling and avoidance of activity in community-living older persons who avoid activity due to fear of falling’ which we would like to submit for publication in BMC Public Health. Below you will find our ‘point-by point’ response.

We thanks Reviewer 1 for her positive response.

Comment 1 of Reviewer 2:
“Community-living elderly are the most heterogenous population we know. Is there a possibility in ongoing or further analyses of this study group to discriminate better between robust or frail elderly study participants and their outcome(baseline data and follow up?: Kressig RW, Wolf SL, Sattin RW, O'Grady M, Greenspan A, Curns A, Kutner M. Associations of demographic, functional, and behavioral characteristics with activity-related fear of falling among older adults transitioning to frailty. J Am Geriatr Soc. 2001 Nov;49(11):1456-62).)?

Our response:
With respect to point 1 of Reviewer 2 we have added a limitation to the Discussion on page 11, lines 18-21, (in italics): ‘...of severe fear of falling and related avoidance of activity. Third, we included community-living older persons which can be considered as a heterogeneous sample. Future studies could focus on whether different patterns of correlates exist between more frail and less frail older persons. Finally, we included only persons who reported at least mild fear of falling and avoidance of activity. Also ...

Comment 2 of Reviewer 2:
As mentioned in the discussion, performance-based measures even in a
subgroup could be worthwhile. Are there some ideas what to measure or how to confirm fear of falling in another way?

**Our response:**

With respect to point 2 of Reviewer 2 we reformulated our first mentioned limitation on page 11, lines 11-14, (in italics): ‘… several limitations. First, all measures were self-reported and performance-based measures were not included in the current study. Future studies should include objective measures of balance, gait, muscle strength, vision, etc. to establish a further understanding of the complex construct of fear of falling. Second, our …’.

**Last comment of Reviewer 2:**

There is 1 discretionary revision to mention in the conclusion part: Fear of falling seems to be an early and strong determinant of functional decline (Friedman et al., 2002, JAGS 50: 1329-1335). So the findings of this study are worthwhile not only to plan clinical interventions for people at high risk like rehabilitation/tertiary prevention or psychotherapy, but even to develop secondary preventive measures targeting fear of falling in early stages.

**Our response:**

With respect to the last point of reviewer 2 we have added to the Conclusion (see also in italics) on page 13, lines 20-24, (in italics): ‘… of activity. Although the knowledge about the unique associations of specific variables with levels of severe fear of falling and avoidance of activity is of interest for theoretical reasons, the knowledge of univariate association may also help to identify older people at risk for severe levels of fear of falling and avoidance of activity (secondary prevention) but also to specify the concepts for developing interventions and programmes to reduce fear of falling and avoidance of activity in old age, particularly in their early stages of development (tertiary prevention).’

We hope that you now will consider our manuscript for publication in BMC Public Health.

On the behalf of the co-authors,

Sincerely,

Prof.dr. G.I.J.M. Kempen.