Author's response to reviews

Title: Significant differences in the use of healthcare resources of native-born and foreign-born in Spain.

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Version: 4 Date: 25 May 2009

Author's response to reviews:

EDITOR RESPONSE

In addition, we have the following editorial requests to make of you:

1. Please remove the authors' qualifications from the Title Page.
   Has been removed following this suggestion.

2. Please include contact e-mail addresses for all authors on the Title Page of your manuscript.
   Has been added following this suggestion.

3. You must include additional background information, which places your investigation in context, in the Background sub-section of your Abstract. At present you state only your aims.
   Has been modified following this suggestion.

4. You must include a "Competing Interests" section. This should follow your Conclusions section:
   http://www.biomedcentral.com/bmcpublichealth/ifora/#interests
   Has been added following this suggestion.

5. Please rename your "ACKNOWLEDMENTS" as "Acknowledgements".
   Has been modified following this suggestion.

Reviewer's report (1)

Title: Significant differences in the use of healthcare resources of native-born and foreign-born in Spain.

Version: 3 Date: 20 March 2009
Reviewer: Brian Gushulak
Reviewer's report:
I believe that the authors have adequately addressed the reviewers' comments and concerns and that the manuscript is ready for publication.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
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'

Brian Gushulak
March 19, 2008.

Reviewer's report (2)
Title: Significant differences in the use of healthcare resources of native-born and foreign-born in Spain.
Version: 3 Date: 15 March 2009
Reviewer: Andrea Buron
Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions
None

Minor Essential Revisions
I appreciate all the changes made onto the manuscript by the authors. Reading the manuscript and the comments made by the authors, I have only some comments left:

1. In the introduction, as well as in the discussion section, to the paragraph “The Spanish National Health System attends both legal and illegal immigrants. Theoretically a valid identity documents (healthcare card) is necessary to be attended yet the truth is that immigrants who lack this document and remain in the country as illegal aliens are also attended by the health system. It is important to note that in order to receive the healthcare card the only requisite is a registration certificate from the municipal register.” I would add 2 important facts that I believe are not sufficiently stated:

• that in order to register in the municipal register there is theoretically no need to be legal, people only need to show an ID but not a residence permit;
• and that in absence of a healthcare card, the only healthcare service that attends people are the EDs, primary care access is restricted in most cases to
people with healthcare card.

The following paragraph has been added to the Introduction following the reviewer suggestion:

That in order to register in the municipal register there is theoretically no need to be legal, people only need to show an ID but not a residence permit; and that in absence of a healthcare card, the only healthcare service that attends people are the EDs, primary care access is restricted in most cases to people with healthcare card.

2. As I suggested in my previous review, it would be helpful to have a table contrasting the survey data with register data from official sources (municipal register), not with data from another survey (which may have his own but similar limitations). Perhaps a third column could be added with this data in table 1.

We agree with the reviewer and we have added the data of the National Statistics Institute (NEI). Municipal Register: statistical use and List of place names, in a third column (table 1)

3. Regarding the inclusion of some EU countries in the same package as Spain, I see the comment, but Poland is not mentioned and it is important since its inclusion in the EU is prior to the time period of the study and therefore directly affects a possible misclassification (Bulgaria and Romania, as the authors state, were not included and therefore is not so relevant to mention them).

According to data from the National Statistics Institute and the Ministry of Labour and Immigration, as at January 1, 2007 the Polish population did not appear among the most frequent nationalities, (therefore represent a very small proportion over the entire immigrant population in Spain)

http://www.ine.es/prodyser/pubweb/espcif/pobl08.pdf

4. After stating the overrepresentation of the Latin America population in the survey, authors should be able to hypothesize about the direction of the possible bias in the ED utilization, lifestyles and other important outcome variables of the study. This refers to the sentence “The fact that the questionnaire was written in Spanish makes it easier for the Latin American population, as well as for immigrants who have been in Spain for a long time, to answer the questions. Therefore, over representation of the Latin American population is likely to occur.”

The following paragraph has been added to the discussion following the reviewer suggestion:

This over representation of the Latin American population may constitute a possible bias in the ED utilization, lifestyles and other important outcome variables of the study, so the results for the entire immigrant population may be biased by this subgroup.

5. As to the tables 3, 4 and 5, I would suggest to eliminate the variable value
“yes” where possible because it is obvious and therefore unnecessary.
The tables 3, 4 and 5 has been modified following this suggestion

6. The statement “actually 15.1% of children born in Spain have foreign mothers” in page 10 deserves a reference, as does the sentence “We can explain this circumstance if we bear in mind that the immigrant population, coming mainly from European Union countries, tends to be made up of people who are establishing their final residence in our country. ”
The following reference has been added
The following reference has been added

Discretionary Revisions
7. Some minor aspects detected:
• page 10, “Data on hospitalization of immigrants in Spain is still scarce. Studies carried out in our country by Sanz et al [24] or the study by Cots et al. based on hospital discharges; conclude that consumption of hospital stays” a comma rather than a semicolon should be used after “discharges”; alternatively the following way could be clearer “Data on hospitalization of immigrants in Spain is still scarce. Studies carried out in our country and based on hospital discharges, like the one by Sanz et al [24] or the study by Cots et al., conclude that consumption of hospital stays”. Also the study by Cots et al. deserves a reference as well.
Sorry for the mistake, the reference has been added.

• page 10, “Finally, in regard to preventative measures, in a recent review”, better “preventive” in order to be coherent with the rest of the text;
We agree with the reviewer and the text has been modified following this suggestion.

• page 11, “Other limitation is the inclusion of the new countries recently incorporated to European Union…” is not Other but Another.
We agree with the reviewer and the text has been modified following this suggestion.

• Page 11, “That future investigation will need to consider the differences in health care utilization and health characteristics between member states that may influence demands for service. But in the 2006 survey the proportion of migrants from the EU, Canada and the USA was very small and in a preliminary
analysis (age adjusted) we found a similar health profile and use of health services to the indigenous population so we decided to analyze the as a single group.” I believe the first “That” is not necessary; and that at the end of the paragraph authors wanted to say “them” instead of “the”.
We agree with the reviewer and the text has been modified following this suggestion.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
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