August 6, 2009

Editor,  
BMC Public Health

RE: MS 1496092565260804 “Public perceptions of quarantine: a post-outbreak community-based telephone survey”

To the Editor,

Thank you for the peer review of our above-named manuscript. We appreciate the opportunity to revise and resubmit our paper for further consideration by BMC Public Health. We would also like to thank our two peer reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions on our work.

We have addressed the reviewers’ comments in the form of a revised manuscript (all revisions are highlighted in yellow). Also, for the sake of convenience, all revisions are detailed on a point-by-point basis below.

Response to comments by Reviewer #1

Major Revisions

The reviewer suggested no major revisions.

Minor Revisions

We have addressed each comment in turn below:

- The reviewer requests that we include “a discussion of the variance in response by those who were actually quarantined during SARS.” As noted by the reviewer, “the numbers are too small for meaningful analyses.” Indeed, the proportion of study participants who were directly affected by quarantine during SARS was exceedingly small (only 4%). Accordingly, we did not perform any sub-group analyses comparing those who were directly affected and those who were not, as noted in the original manuscript. Given the very small numbers, we do not feel comfortable reporting any observed differences or discussing/interpreting the possible meaning of any observed differences between the two groups.

- The reviewer comments: “The data are sound, but the methods for participant selection should be described in more detail. How is this survey part of a larger effort? What is the response rate?” With respect to the reviewer’s first question, the 15 items on quarantine were a subset of a larger telephone survey that was conducted as a community evaluation of the public health response to the SARS outbreak in Greater Toronto. Regarding response rate, the revised manuscript includes a new paragraph in the Methods section to address this issue (under the sub-heading “Data Collection and Analysis”).
- The sentence at the bottom of page 10 continuing on to page 11 has been edited in the manner suggested by the reviewer.

- We thank the reviewer for her positive comments regarding the writing style, title and abstract, and the potential for contribution to the scientific literature.

Response to comments by Reviewer #2

Major Revisions

The reviewer suggested no major revisions.

Minor Revisions

We have addressed each comment in turn below:

1. The correction on page 4 has been made by deleting the redundant “is”.

2. In the same section on page 4, the term “so-called bedroom communities” has been replaced with additional descriptive information regarding the two study regions.

3. The wording of the sentence in question on page 5 has been corrected.

4. As noted above in response to a comment by Reviewer #1, a new paragraph has been added to the Methods section (“Data Collection and Analysis”) to address the issue of response rate.

5. The reviewer asks: “Are the results described in this section [on page 6] actually documented in Table 2?” We apologize for the confusion here. To address this issue, we have revised the wording in the second paragraph of the Results section. Also, in response to another comment by this reviewer (see point 7 below), we have reformatted Table 2, which also helps clarify the presentation of results.

6. We thank the reviewer for identifying the problem in the sentence on page 10. The sentence has been reworded in the revised manuscript.

7. As suggested by the reviewer, we have revised the formatting of Table 2. We agree with the reviewer that the simplified version of the table is neater and therefore preferable to the original version, especially given that there are no significant differences between the two study regions.

Closing

We believe that we have addressed the comments of both peer reviewers. We look forward to receiving further feedback from the editorial team. Once again, we thank our two reviewers for
their time and effort. We believe that their comments and suggestions have improved the paper substantially.

Sincerely yours,

C. Shawn Tracy
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for Elizabeth Rea and Ross Upshur