Author's response to reviews

Title: Does mild COPD affect prognosis in the elderly?

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Author's response to reviews: see over
To the Editor
BMC Pulmonary Medicine

Dear Editor

we would like to thank both the reviewers for their insightful comments. We have tried to address all of them; below you find a point-by-point description of the editings made.

Best regards

Claudio Pedone

Referee # 1.

Minor essential revisions.
We have made the corrections suggested by the reviewer.

Discretionary revisions.
1. We added the causes of death in the relevant section of the results.
2. To better explain the complex relationship between FEV1 and survival we added a sentence (page 5, second to last sentence of first paragraph) on the fact that improvement in FEV1 does not necessarily translate in better survival.

Referee # 2.

Major compulsory revisions
1. “Too little information about the reference sample ...”: Information about sample selection has been added at page 2, beginning of the "Data source" section.
2. “Gender distribution ...” The gender distribution of our sample according to severity of obstruction has been reported in table 2.
3. “The authors must be much more careful in their conclusions.” We have smoothed the conclusions in the abstract and in the discussion. We acknowledged the relatively low power and the issue of generalizability in the limitations.
4. “Mortality data by sex must be given and their influence on the results ...” We added the gender-specific mortality data in the relevant section of the results. As per reviewer’s request, we analyzed the influence of sex on the results. As shown in the table below, the effect of bronchial obstruction on mortality was more evident in women, as shown in the table below, but of course it is difficult to draw conclusions from such an unadjusted analysis not taken into account the effect of smoking. We believe that to investigate the role of gender as an effect modifier of the relationship
between bronchial obstruction and mortality is beyond the scope of this study; nonetheless we are ready to expand the results and the discussion to take into account this issue should the reviewer deem it necessary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age &lt;75 years</th>
<th></th>
<th>Age ≥75 years</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATS mild</td>
<td>1.21 (.50 – 2.74)</td>
<td>3.42 (1.10 – 9.94)</td>
<td>.56 (.27 – 1.08)</td>
<td>1.05 (.41 – 2.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATS moderate/severe</td>
<td>3.36 (1.83 – 6.33)</td>
<td>5.09 (1.75 – 14.33)</td>
<td>1.34 (.79 – 2.23)</td>
<td>2.06 (.92 – 4.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTS mild</td>
<td>1.76 (.91 – 3.43)</td>
<td>4.66 (1.92 – 11.72)</td>
<td>2.98 (.76 – 8.48)</td>
<td>1.95 (.85 – 4.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTS moderate/severe</td>
<td>2.45 (1.23 – 4.95)</td>
<td>3.21 (.96 – 9.75)</td>
<td>2.24 (1.14 – 4.12)</td>
<td>4.21 (1.27 – 11.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOLD mild</td>
<td>2.02 (1.04 – 4.01)</td>
<td>4.05 (1.67 – 9.99)</td>
<td>.79 (.40 – 1.48)</td>
<td>1.07 (.41 – 2.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOLD moderate/severe</td>
<td>2.41 (1.21 – 4.87)</td>
<td>2.54 (.69 – 7.94)</td>
<td>1.11 (.66 – 1.86)</td>
<td>2.43 (1.16 – 4.94)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. “The language, particularly the grammar, must be revised.” The paper has been checked and revised to improve the language.

**Minor essential revisions**
1. “Figure legends are incomplete.” We changed the legends as required.
2. “Incomplete text after point 3 …” We are sorry for the clerical error, it has been fixed.
3. “Last sentence in pulmonary function tests is mentioned twice” Ditto.

**Discretionary revisions**
1. “Numbers could be included …” We included the actual numbers in table 1.