Author's response to reviews

Title: Outcome Measures of a 6 Minute Walk Test: Relationships with Physiologic and Computed Tomography Findings in Patients with Sarcoidosis

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Dr Norton,

Regarding adding a statement explaining why informed consent was not required, since this is a retrospective study and reviewing only medical records this is a self explanatory where written informed consent is not required in our institution. Nevertheless, we have added that only medical records were reviewed.

We have eliminated the bootstrap method from our study due to restriction in SPSS version 18.In addition we believe this method have no clinical significance to our study. Furthermore, our results despite the limited sample of patients are in line with other studies that physiological variables namely pulmonary function tests are important factors in predicting the walking distance in sarcoidosis.

Below you will find point-by-point response to the concerns raised by Dr Giorgio Bedogni.

Thank you in advance for giving us the opportunity to improve our manuscript, and we believe we have clearly addressed all the concerns.

Regards

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Dear Dr. Bedogni,

We are delighted to clarify your concerns
Comment
1. Table 6 says that Distance = -43.5*Female + 46.1*FEV1 on the basis of backward elimination stepwise regression - I suppose without bootstrap. Do you confirm? (Please specify the coding of gender in this Table as you did in Table 8).

Response:
Yes, the coefficients in the table:6 are without Bootstrap and only by using backward elimination method as suggested earlier (before it was by using stepwise method).

Comment
2. Table 7 says that DSP = 43.4*FEV1 on the basis of backward elimination stepwise regression - I suppose without bootstrap. Do you confirm?

Response:
Yes, the coefficients in the table:7 are without Bootstrap and only by using backward elimination method as suggested (before it was by using stepwise method).

Comment
No bootstrap SELECTION of predictors is presented in Tables 8 or 9, at least to my understanding. Bootstrap confidence intervals are instead provided for all predictors. The choice of predictors should be based on the bootstrap inclusion fraction (BIF) applied to the backward elimination method. A description of the method can be found in the references I gave in the last review. If am right in interpreting the new tables, I suggest 2 possibilities: 1. select predictors using BIF; OR; 2. FORGET the bootstrap approach entirely. This was something I suggested in the spirit of AMELIORATING the paper and PARTIALLY addressing the correct observation of a reviewer that you have too many covariates in proportion to subjects. If the technique is NOT applied rightly as it seems to be the case here, the paper will be WORSENCED - just the opposite of what I wanted to do.

Response:
In table 8 and 9 the bootstrap analysis was not based on the backward elimination method and by Enter method where the selection of predictors were not based on BIF. The reason to use this method (Enter) in SPSS version 18.0 because the bootstrap procedure is restricted to this method only. If required we will try by using another software. But we strongly believe that we are not going to benefit from it and what additional information is going to add to the clinical context of our study?

Although we have used many variables in a limited sample of patients, our findings is in line with other studies that physiological variables are important factors in predicting the walking distance among patients with sarcoidosis. We do appreciate your effort in improving our statistical methods as well providing a valuable references however we believe the bootstrap should be eliminated from our study.