Author's response to reviews

Title: Prevalence of chronic musculoskeletal disorders in elderly Brazilians: a systematic review of the literature

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Version: 2 Date: 6 December 2011

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

We would like to thank the reviewers for their important comments. We have addressed all comments/suggestions in the revised manuscript (we used track changes for Windows) and we provide a brief explanation of the changes below.

Thank you for considering our manuscript for publication in your Journal.

Sincerely,

Luciana A C Machado

A) Reviewer Ingris Peláez-Ballestas:

Minor Essential Revision:

Please review the following comments and suggestions:

1.-I would like to know why authors did not include the following reference in the systematic review: Rodriguez-Senna E and cols. Prevalence of Rheumatic Disease in Brazil: A study using COPCORD approach. J Rheum 2004;31:594-97. It seems to me, it is an important reference, that have included prevalence in elderly people in Brazil, besides they using a standardize methodology. I suggest to included those references or explain the exclusion.

We would like to thank the reviewer for highlighting the fact that this paper was not included in our review. Because the authors provide data that can be extracted for the population 75 years old or more, we agree with the reviewer and therefore the paper was included in the revised manuscript. All sections of the text have been revised to reflect the inclusion of this additional study.

2.-I don’t understand why the authors excluded rheumatoid arthritis for this systematic review. It is not clear the reason stated in the manuscript.

We have decided a priori not to include musculoskeletal disorders which had particular features/underlying mechanisms that put them in a different group when considering the usual pain patterns from the other musculoskeletal disorders. For this reason (clearly stated on page 5), we did not include data on rheumatoid arthritis or systemic lupus erythematosus.

3.-There are some inconsistencies related to the number of the studies included. In the page 6 said: 11 studies said: "...only four studies fulfilled the inclusion criteria. Seven additional eligible studies..." the total is 11, but in the figure 1 it said, "Studies included in the review (N=12)". Please, review that inconsistence. The numbers are correct. The reviewer missed the inclusion of one government report as listed in the end of this paragraph.

4. - The table 1. I think is the most important data from the paper; I suggested to included Confidence Interval 95% for prevalence specially for chronic pain, and rheumatic disease.

Unfortunately only the paper included in the revised manuscript provides confidence intervals for prevalence estimates (its 95% CI is now described on Table 1). This limitation has been addressed on page 7.
5. - I seem to me some mistake in the page 10: it mentioned "lower limb pain" instead "low back pain". I suggested double-checking that paragraph.

The paragraph is correct. We make a comparison between prevalence estimates for low back pain and lower limb/knee pain.

6. -Why don’t the authors made a meta-analysis?

It was not possible to make a meta-analysis due to important heterogeneity in terms of samples, diagnoses and definitions of chronic symptoms. This has been pointed out in the Discussion.

B) Reviewer Clermont E Dionne:

- Major Compulsory Revisions: Please, explain how the database were chosen and why the Embase and CINAHL databases were not included.

We believe the databases chosen were adequate for our research question, which focused on the Brazilian population. First, we chose Medline because it is the largest database of references in the biomedical field. Second, we chose LILACS, which is the largest and most important database of references from Latin America and the Caribbean. Third, we chose SCIELO, which is a scientific electronic library that publishes full texts of articles from developing countries in order to increase their visibility. Finally, we searched two Theses databases and the Brazilian Institute of Statistics website in order to find non-published studies.

- Minor Essential Revisions and Questions (not for publication)

Page 8, line 15: “...whether they had received...”?

Page 18, Legend of Table 3: “? = uncertain”

The text has been edited accordingly.