Author’s response to reviews

Title: Computer work and self-reported variables on anthropometrics, computer usage, work ability, productivity, pain, and physical activity

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Version: 3 Date: 25 May 2013

Author’s response to reviews: see over
Authors’ responses to review

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BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders MS: 9226466159405262

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Version: 3 Date: 20 May 2013

Authors’ responses to review: See over
Reviewer's report

Title: Computer work and self-reported variables on anthropometric, computer usage, work ability, productivity, pain, and physical activity

Version: 2 Date: 10 May 2013

Reviewer: Morten Wærsted

Reviewer's report:
The manuscript has improved substantially since the last version. However, there are still some issues I think should be dealt with before I'll advice it to be published.

- Thank you for your positive evaluation. We have addressed your additional comments and hope to meet your requirements (see below).

* Concerning the number of participants, the number invited is now stated to approximately 5000 and the number participating to 690. As I understood to former version of the manuscript, there was 804 subjects filling in the questionnaire, but only 690 of these returned a complete questionnaire and only these 690 were included. I’m not in a position to decide whether the authors should mention this detail. However, the figure 804 still “pops up” in the manuscript, at least in two places. In line 28 on page 5 you state “This study included all workers that completed the questionnaire (690 out of 804)”, but this information does not make much sense, as the reader has not earlier been presented with the issue of exclusion for not completing the questionnaire. In line 31 on page 11 the figure given in parentheses must relate to the 804 and not 690 (804 out of 5000 is approx. 16%, whereas 690 out of 5000 is approx. 14%).

- We see your point and agree that the participant number was somehow confusing. We now report that 114 workers were excluded from the analysis in the Methods section/Subjects (see highlighted change P4). We corrected the participation rate to 14% (see highlighted change P12) and checked that there was no further mention of the 804 workers.

* At the bottom of page 5 you state “Workers reporting pain intensity # 2 cm on the visual analogue scale (0-10 cm) in neck, shoulders, and arms for workers were considered to have musculoskeletal pain. Workers reporting pain intensity < 2 were considered pain free”. Why was the threshold of 2cm on the VAS chosen? Furthermore – when reading this first time, I got the impression that you reduced the information given in the VAS in all analyses. However, when reading all parts of the manuscript I got the impression the you only used this reduction of the pain data when you counted number of pain afflicted body regions. If so, this must be stated in the Methods section, and I suggest that this information is moved to the top of page 5 where you comment the pain variable. Preferably you could state that the pain variable is a continuous measure, but the special case of the number of afflicted regions. You should also state here (bottom page 4 / top page 5) that you measure pain on a visual analogue scale. Presently you only give this information in the cited part on the bottom of page 5. (In the cited part of the manuscript there is also...
We agree and have consequently reformulated the section related to the pain assessments (see highlighted changes on the bottom of page 4 / top page 5). We also acknowledge that the VAS threshold > 2 was intriguing (this value was chosen to select the workers reporting moderate to high pain but was not used for the rest of the analysis) – Thus, we changed it to VAS > 0 (Table 5 (now Table 6) was amended). The language error was corrected.

* When discussing the limitations of sampling all data in a questionnaire (page 11), I think you should also discuss the possible bias of sampling both exposure and effect in the same questionnaire. As far as I could read, this point has not been commented. This is a serious problem afflicting many epidemiological studies. Your advice on adding recordings of computer use and clinical examination would also address this problem.

We fully agree with your comment (this was already stated in the Introduction P3, Lines 21-22). We have added this limitation to the discussion (see highlighted change P12).

* The mixture of continuous variables and count variables make the tables a bit “inelegant”. May be you could split the table with a new heading, so that the top part have the continues variables giving number, median and quartiles, while the lower part give the count variables? In Table 3 the text in the left column is bewildering, as you there state “… every day in the last 12 months”, but the “every day” does only apply to the last category. May be you could write “Number of days with ….. complaints in the last 12 months”?

We have changed the tables accordingly. We do hope that you will see the tables more “elegant”. Table 1 was split into two tables (Tables 1 and 2). The continuous variables of Table 2 (now Table 3) are now reported in the Results section. The continuous variables of Table 3 (now Table 4) are now reported in a new figure (new Figure 1). The text in the left column was amended according to you comment (see highlighted changes). The continuous variable of Table 6 (now Table 7) is now reported in the Results section.

* The language is much improved. However, there are still examples of misspellings and of bad language. One example is given above. Other examples are the sentence line 23-25 on page 3 “Office workers often report work-related discomfort and pain despite a lack of evidence between computer use and neck and upper extremities disorders” (what do you mean?), in the sentence line 14-16 on page 9 “Contrary to these studies, we did not found any significant correlation between ………” (I suppose you should write “…. we did not find …..”), and in the sentence line 23-24 further down on page 9 “However, argument exit suggesting a relationship between complaint in the neck-shoulder and distal arm pain during mouse usage” (to make meaning to me you should either write “….. argument exists …..” or “…. arguments exist ….. ”, as the word “exit” do not fit in). I have not read the manuscript in order to find all misspellings, so please do another proof-reading of the entire manuscript.
• We have corrected the language issues you mentioned. Special emphasis was given to the writing style after the revisions. The manuscript has been proof-read by an English correspondent. All changes are highlighted.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited
  • The manuscript has been proof-read by an English correspondent (see also response to your previous comment).

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