Author's response to reviews

Title: Tibia shaft fractures: costly burden of nonunions

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

Thank you for your second review of our paper. In the opening section of your comments you noted that additional analyses would help better understand the subject at hand. We agree with you, however, at the moment, no funding is available to further this research. Therefore, we are unable to address this comment, unfortunately, and are keeping the current scope of the paper. We have addressed your other comments (please see items below).

Thank you again for your review and suggestions. They improved our paper, and we greatly appreciate your time and effort.

Sincerely,

Jenya Antonova on behalf of the authors.

The authors have responded to some of my previous comments, at least in part, although I am puzzled why they did not go further – this would be a much more substantive paper if the analyses they plan to do, looking at associations between various factors (such as presence of additional fractures) on nonunion status and on health care costs) were included in this paper. If it continues to be a stand-alone descriptive paper, there are a few remaining clarifications that would be useful to address:

1) I think it would be valuable to note the difference between the nonunion and union fractures in frequency of other fractures in the abstract

[X] Author response: the difference between the nonunion and union fractures in frequency of other fractures was noted in the abstract as a general statement (due to limitations of the word count). We assumed that you were suggesting to add more details on this. To address your suggestion, we detailed the types of fractures.

Page 4, line 59 - should that be united (instead of untied)?
[x] Author response: corrected.

Page 6, line 85. HIPAA is the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (you left out “Accountability”)
[x] Author response: corrected.

line 87 - what is “carve-out services”? Does the data set cover the entire US or is it a particular region?
[X] Author response: Carve-out services are medical services that are separated from a contract and paid under a different arrangement. We have added this
clarification to the methods section as a footnote. 
The data cover the entire US population. We added this clarification in the methods section.

Page 7 - you mention socioeconomic characteristics: what specific socioeconomic variables were available in this data set? 
[X] Author response: we removed mentioning of the socioeconomic characteristics, it was included by mistake.

How much missing data was there for the Charleston index? 
[X] Author response: There were no missing data for the Charleston Index because it was calculated at baseline and missing diagnosis codes means that the patient did not have the condition.

Page 8 , line 129: HIPAA (not HIPPA) 
[x] Author response: Corrected

Page 9, lines 135-139. The data you describe in this paragraph are NOT shown in Table 1. Please take out the reference to Table 1. 
[x] Author response: Corrected.

Page 9, lines 141-144: The region and type of insurance coverage are NOT shown in Table 1. Also, the description of the Charleston index would be more informative if you also gave a proportion > 3 (or 4 or 5; something that better captures the high end of the distribution) 
[x] Author response: Unfortunately, we do not have these data available. We are unable to calculate them now either because we had an one-time access to the data and no longer can re-run our analyses.

Don't need Table 1 and Figure 1; these are redundant. Just show these data in one form or the other. 
[X] Author response: Corrected.

Page 12, line 206. Are you saying that a health insurance company would use this information to make decisions about what care they would or would not cover? 
[x] Author response: The article is not saying that.

Line 210: First sentence is not accurate and should be deleted. 
[x] Author response: Corrected.

Page 13, line 221-223: Why is it "coincidental" that patients with nonunion were more likely to have additional fractures? 
[x] Author response: Corrected.