Author's response to reviews

Title: Factors Influencing Decision Making in Orthopedic Surgery - an international online survey of 1147 orthopedic surgeons

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Reply to the reviewers comments

Dear Editor,

we had two detailed and thoughtfull peer reviews to our paper draft. Some parts of the reviews are quite "mechanistic" in a way that the strict rules of clinical research and publication are applied in a stringent manner. Now was our study not related to the field of clinical research but the field of social sciences where study design and reporting methods are different. This obviously was a bit irritating to reviewers used to the field of natural science. Nevertheless we found it important to publish our study in a journal that is read by the subjects of our study – surgeons in the field of musculo-skeletal surgery. We have taken on board a substantial amount of improvement proposals. Here the detailed list of revisions based on the reviews:

An interesting study that deserves publication.

A power analysis could be included. The authors have mentioned low response rate as a weakness in their study but this study could also be viewed as a 'convenience sample'.

⇒ A response rate as reported by us does not imply a low validity as stated in the text. A power analysis is awkward for a study like this, especially if one wants to test all items. We have therefore not performed a power analysis.
The authors should compare demographics of responders to non-responders to ensure that the groups are the same (e.g. were non-responders non-English speakers which would explain the non-response)

⇒ there are no demographics of non-responders available as they didn't respond

Language bias should be mentioned as most literature and meetings are in English and this may also bias response to the survey and how surgeons handle information sent to them

⇒ that's right, has been implemented in Discussion

Why were some questionnaires returned only partially completed? Was this a weakness in the design of the electronic version?

⇒ All Questions included the option of a "no answer" reply, this was necessary not to provoke a complete withdrawal. It is a normal method in online surveys.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Reviewer 2
Once a revised paper is drafted it should be reviewed by an English language editor.

-> the manuscript is currently reviewed by an English language editorial service, unfortunately this has not been finished by the re-submission deadline

Title does not reflect the focus of the study – rather than ‘factors influencing decision making’ I would suggest ‘sources of information influencing

⇒ This idea has been taken on board, title changed

Abstract:

- Missing the objective of the study and study design (...) ⇒ It is only the abstract so we had to keep contents short. Details regarding objectives and study methodology and conclusions added.

Introduction

- References need to be added to support many statements. ⇒ References added

- There needs to be more consistent use of terms. For example the first sentence says ‘implants and materials’ and then implants and techniques ⇒ Changed were feasible as there are no manufacturers of techniques but orthopaedic surgeons can acquire new techniques.

- No objective or research questions are provided at the end of the introduction ⇒ altered
- The sentences beginning “we developed a questionnaire focusing primarily on the factors... this needs to be moved to the methods section
  ➔ moved

Material and methods
- Needs to have the study design added
  ➔ altered
- Needs more details on how the sequence was randomized
  ➔ softwaresolution mentioned

Results
- “overall 12,005 orthopedic surgeons were contacted”…
  ➔ clarified

- Need to have a table of the characteristics of participants rather than report each characteristic in separate figure. You could have the department heads' characteristics reported separately from other
  ➔ the difference of junior and senior surgeons was not focus of this study and we therefore think it would make the manuscript too long if we give all the details regarding this area

- The results only start later in the paper – this needs to be moved up to include characteristics of participants and response rate
characteristics and response rate in methodology

How was the survey developed and tested? For example the question on rating sources of information on the internet is rather vague given you could go to electronic journals available on the internet or to evidence-based programs or to company websites.

It is right that “information from the internet” is rather vague but that is due to the nature of the internet. This has been mentioned in the discussion section now.

Discussion

These sources of information should be discussed in terms of their effectiveness for changing knowledge, attitudes and uptake in clinical practice – see EPOC website and work of individuals

Implement in discussion

The second paragraph more or less repeats results and % provided within results section rather than summarizes results. There is reference to studies in the last sentence but no reference citations are provided in the reference list.

Reference list updated

Format

I don’t think this paper followed journal guidelines for format – all figures and tables
should be at the end of the paper and not within MAJOR
- The paper was single spaced – usually journals require double spacing --> all changed