Dear Editor,

We thank you and the referee for valuable comments on the manuscript. We have now made changes in the text according to suggestions.

New title: Prevalence of musculoskeletal disorders in dentists

Discretionary revisions
We have not any information on non-respondents other than the cause of non-participation and we have not information about numbers of patients treated by participants. We have information only on hours worked per week. We did not find any significant relation of this variable with the outcomes under study. More hours worked per week related with male gender and working long hours. Additional sentence at page 9, "baseline characteristics":

37% of dentists mostly women worked 30 or fewer hours per week while 25% worked more than 40 hours.

Major compulsory revision
1. In Greece also there are specialists and general dentists. Because postgraduate studies may have an influence on predictors and consequences of MSDs we treated and analysed differently education and specialization. In our study higher education group of dentists consist of specialists with or without a Master or PhD degree and general dentists who hold a PhD or a Master degree (e.g. in Public or Community health). We clarify this according to reviewer comment.
Reviseesed sentence at page 9, "Response":
Our sample consisted from general dentists (92.1%) and specialists mainly orthodontists (4.4%), oral surgeons, endodontists, periodontists and, specialists in paediatric dentistry. A significant proportion of general dentists had postgraduate studies (PhD or MSc degree).

2.

We found many differences between specialists and general dentists. But the numbers were too small (less than five persons) for the other groups except orthodontists, to draw conclusions. We prefer to mention only the most significant differences between the groups of orthodontists and general dentists.

Additional paragraph at page 11, "occurrence of musculoskeletal complaints":
Specialists differed from general dentists in physical and psychosocial risk factors, in subjective health complaints and, in prevalence of complaints. The small numbers of specialists in each group did not allow drawing conclusions, except of orthodontists’ group. Compared to general dentists, orthodontists worked fewer hours per week (p<0.05), reported lower perceived exertion and lower need for recovery (p<0.05). The 12-month prevalence of complaints of shoulder and hand/wrist
differed significantly between orthodontists and general dentists. Hand/wrist complaints were more prevalent in orthodontists (42.1% vs. 25.5% in general dentists), where shoulder complaints reported significantly more often by general dentists (0% vs. 21.2%, respectively). Hand/wrist complaints accounted of more than 50% of total absences of orthodontists. Furthermore, our study showed greater impact of hand/wrist complaints in orthodontists while differences in prevalence of complaints in various body sites between general dentists and specialists have been reported in a previous study [18].

Athens, 20th April 2004
EC Alexopoulos