Author's response to reviews

Title: Hard physical work combined with heavy smoking or overweight may result in so-called Modic changes

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Re: MS 1420256691479200- Hard physical work combined with heavy smoking or overweight may result in so-called Modic changes.

Dear Dr. J.A. Le Good

Thank you for the reviewed version of the above manuscript. I believe that I have now been able to satisfy the remaining comments from the reviewers.

Secondary data
Both reviewers want it highlighted that the study is a secondary analysis report. This was already apparent in the old version but I have added new text to make this absolutely clear:
In the abstract, the first sentence now starts with the words “Secondary analysis of a data base pertaining to…”. In the abstracts, under conclusions, the second sentence now starts with “If this finding can be reproduced in other studies…” In the Methods section, the very first sentence reads: “The study makes use of already existing data.”

Elizabeth Dean’s additional comments have been dealt with in the following manner:

Hypotheses/assumptions
We agree that the concepts of the above words cannot necessarily be used synonymously. We have tightened our text in the following manner: We have made sure that the word “hypothesis” is used for the underlying concept that mini fractures/mechanical factors may cause the vertebral inflammatory process, whereas the term “assumptions” is used synonymously with “objectives of the study”. These two concepts have been strictly separated throughout the text.

Odds ratios
I have now understood what the reviewer means and have clarified the fact that percentages are used in Table 4 in the preliminary analyses, in which we studied the pattern of findings between the single explanatory variables vs. the outcome variables. We have added the text: “(reported as percentages)” in the methods section, under data analysis, first para. It is now clearly reported that the first set of analyses depend on percentages with 95% confidence intervals, whereas the other two sets of analysis (bivariate and multivariate) are reported as odds ratios with 95% confidence intervals. In the discussion section (3rd para), the text has been somewhat changed. Instead of providing the exact percentages, a summary statement is provided.

The grammatical issue of “overweight”
The reviewer calls upon the editor to make a decision as to whether “overweight” can be used as a noun together with the other nouns (smoking and work). According to my dictionary, overweight is both an adjective and noun, so it should be fine the way it stands

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I have changed the words “of which” to “of whom”, as requested.

Changes to the text, in accordance with the above requests, have been highlighted in yellow.

Kind regards
Charlotte Leboeuf-Yde
(on behalf of the authors)