Author's response to reviews

Title: Musculoskeletal symptoms of the upper extremities and the neck: a cross-sectional study on prevalence and symptom-predicting factors at visual display terminal (VDT) workstations

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear colleague,

thank you very much for the – again – helpful comments of the reviewer. Please find enclosed the revised manuscript. The point-to-point description of the changes made follows below.

After final modification, the manuscript was corrected by a native speaker from Canada, so the English language should be much better by now.

We will be most pleased if you find this manuscript worthy of publication and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Monika A. Rieger, MD.

Point-by-point description of the changes made according to the reviewer’s comment (reviewer: Julius Sim):

i. Page 6:
Points 3 to 5 are still not completely clear. I think what they are saying is that they identified those predictors in the category in question that were significant (i.e. the factors were ‘restricted’ to those that were significant), rather than referring to what would commonly be thought of as statistically ‘adjusting’ one variable for one or more others. If so, perhaps say something along the lines of: ‘Identification of those workplace factors/psychosocial factors/features of the workplace that were significantly associated with the presence of symptoms’. If, on the other hand, it is indeed a case of statistical adjustment, it needs to be made clear which variable was adjusted for (not ‘to’) which other variable(s).

We changed the text and wrote:

According to existing literature on the topic, symptoms of the neck and the upper extremities may be caused by many factors [1, 5-7, 40-43]. Based on the generated data, multivariable analyses were conducted for the occurrence of symptoms in the various parts of the body, referring to all variables significantly associated with the presence of symptoms. The influence of personal, psychosocial, workplace, and work-related factors were calculated by means of logistical regression analysis for symptoms occurring in the neck, shoulder, elbow/forearm, and hand/wrist…..

In addition, we changed “adjusted to” into “adjusted for” in the list of steps in analyses.
ii. Page 6:
A variable cannot have a correlation with an outcome parameter, as a parameter does not refer to a variable as such, but to a particular statistical measure on a variable (in the population, rather than in the sample). Just say ‘outcome variable’.

Thank you – we changed this.

iii. Page 12:
In the sentence ‘The aim of this study…’, I suggest ‘predicting factors’ is changed to ‘predictors’, as the former may suggest a cause-effect relationship, whereas the latter is standard statistical terminology in cross-sectional studies, and does not necessary imply a causal process.

Thank you – we changed this throughout the manuscript.

iv. Tables:
The dashes in the confidence intervals have mainly been replaced with commas. A very minor point: one or two seem to have been overlooked in Table 3.

Sorry, we overlooked this but changed it by now.

Also, the space before the comma can be removed. In Table 5, these are ‘probability’ values not ‘significance’ values (notwithstanding the fact that SPSS uses this term in its output). Statistical significance is inferred from – but is not the same thing as – the magnitude of the p value. I would just label the column with ‘p value’.

Thank you – we changed this.