Author's response to reviews

Title: Systematic review and meta-analysis of Transurethral Needle Ablation in symptomatic Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia.

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19th May 2006

Dear Sir,

We greatly appreciate your interest in our paper and sincerely regret the delay in our response. After carefully reading all the observations of the reviewers, we have modified the paper in an attempt to address the comments made. However, we would like to mention that there are deep discrepancies among the reviewers' comments making difficult to take all of them into account. In essence, as we wrote you on April 28, while two of the reviewers recommend to leave the paper as is and to publish it without revision, the referee number 2 suggests that major changes should be made. Given that his recommendations are not well-matched with those expressed by the rest of the reviewers we were a little bit confused. Therefore, after checking this problem with the assistant editor and following her recommendations, we provide below point-by-point replies to the specific comments of the reviewer number 3.

Minor essential revisions:

We greatly appreciate your nice words about our paper. However, regarding your first concern it should be mentioned that our National Health System does not work on a reimbursement basis. In addition, we would like to outline that though the Agency for Health Technology Assessment is an agency dependent upon the Spanish Ministry of Health, the authorization of medical devices does not depend on our reports and that this institution does not impose any restrictions on the content of the manuscripts we prepare, which are official though non-binding publications. In effect, every systematic review we perform, including this specific case, adheres to validated guidelines and recommendations on the subject and at any time we try to do our best to provide information on the possible benefits and risks, and on the limitations of the evidence supporting the use of the assessed technology without any constraint.

Conclusions: As to the suggestion that the conclusions from the abstract are more negative than those of the full text we really believe that they are analogous. The full text conclusions do not make reference to the limitations of evidence found because they are addressed in a previous specific section of limitations but we consider they need to be reflected in the abstract. However, following your recommendations we have modified this paragraph in an attempt to make a less pessimistic statement.

On the other hand, as regards your concern about that it is hard to see which other evaluation can be done comparing TUNA with TURP we have to say that unfortunately we have not found any study addressing face to face both techniques from a formal economical point of view. Overall cost-effectiveness ratio of the technique is still a lacking task.

In addition, we would like to say that even we are in complete agreement with your opinion that TUNA does not necessarily need to be only compared to TURP but also to the cost-effectiveness of pharmacological treatment of BPH, we have not found any study comparing TUNA with medical treatment despite the extensive search performed. We are aware of the importance these comparisons have and truly regret that the literature offers no studies comparing TUNA with pharmacological treatment, which is why our lecturers are alerted about this in different sections of the text (results, discussion, conclusions). Furthermore, the paper underscores that the lack of comparative studies with respect to medical treatment constitutes an area of critical importance to determine the exact role of TUNA in the treatment of symptomatic BPH.

We hope you will find these changes to your liking, and we will look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,
Bouza Carmen, MD, PhD