Author's response to reviews

Title: Malignant transformation in 5071 southern Taiwanese patients with potentially malignant oral mucosal disorders

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Title: Malignant transformation in 5071 southern Taiwanese patients with potentially malignant oral mucosal disorders
25th June, 2014

Dear Editor-in-Chief:

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to give us an opportunity to submit the revised manuscript for re-review by the prestigious BMC Oral Health. Regarding the valuable and important comments of the expert reviewers and the editor, we would reply to the best of our knowledge and explained as below:

Reviewer: Maria GH Biazevic

Background

Line 47 and 48: since there are world newer data on the prevalence, incidence and mortality rates, I suggest that the references be upgraded.

Line 48, 49. It would be interesting that the authors include data on the betel consumption among Taiwan population. Which proportion of the man is expected to chew betel-quid?

Response: These two points have been corrected with updated references added (Please consult lines 49-50 and 338-346 of the revised manuscript).

Methods

Line 74. It’s necessary to highlight the population’s profile that looks for attendance at this Hospital. How many cases are treated there, comparing this data with the total number of cases in Taiwan? Is it a public or private setting?

Response: This point has been corrected; we would indicate that no national data of OPMD are available in Taiwan at present (Please consult lines 77-83 of the revised manuscript).

How did the patients were followed? In this Section, details of the protocols and frequencies of consultations should be mentioned.

Response: This point has been corrected (Please consult lines 99-106 of the revised manuscript).

This Section should include a description of the statistical tests, level of significance, and also ethical considerations with regard the Helsinki’s declaration.

Response: This point has been included (Please consult lines 98-99, 115-123 of the revised manuscript).

Results

The authors did not mention if some lost of follow ups occurred.

Response: This point has been corrected (Please consult lines 125-129 of the revised manuscript).

Information with regard the lesions dimensions should be included among the studied variables.

Response: This is an important point; however, we would regret to mention that the number of recorded data of lesions dimensions in the current study has not been large enough for adequate statistical evaluation.

Discussion

Line 157-158. Did the former mentioned study perform histopathological diagnosis?
This should be clarified.  
**Response:** This point has been corrected with the words “clinically diagnosed” to be deleted (Please consult line 193-195 of the revised manuscript).

Line 199-200. It should be explained in details the pre-screening health promotion program and the periodic clinic follow ups.  
**Response:** This point has been added (Please consult line 239-247 of the revised manuscript).

The study’s limitations should be included.  
**Response:** This point has been added (Please consult line 309-311 of the revised manuscript).

References  
They must be updated, since 21 out of 28 were published before 2009.  
**Response:** Updated references have been added (Please consult line 338-346, 378-384; 403-404 of the revised manuscript).

**Reviewer:** Manoela D Domingues Martins  
- The aim of the study must be more specified in the abstract and at the final of introduction.  
**Response:** This point has been added (Please consult line 25-27; 72-74 of the revised manuscript).

- The authors should provide a conclusion referring the importance of histopathological aspects as a predictor of cancer development.  
**Response:** This point has been added (Please consult line 307-308 of the revised manuscript).

**Reviewer:** Vinicius Carrard  
**Major Compulsory Revisions**  
1. It is recommended to add a table presenting the demographics for each group separately, including the standard deviation for age, status (current, former, never) in relation to tobacco and alcohol.  
**Response:** This point has been added (Please consult Table 2; line 138-140 of the revised manuscript).

2. It would be interesting to perform the analysis of the influence of risk factors for oral cancer, i.e. status of tobacco and alcohol use, on malignant transformation.  
**Response:** This point has been added (Please consult Tables 6 &7; line 181-184 of the revised manuscript).

3. The authors should describe the follow up strategy for each diagnostic group.  
**Response:** This point has been corrected (Please consult lines 99-106 of the revised manuscript).

**Reviewer:** Chun-Pin Chiang  
**Minor Essential Revisions**  
**Response:** Thanks for your critical comment
Editorial comment:
Note that Cox Regression is not free of assumptions and such details are needed (what assumptions were checked and what was the result), specially how the loses of follow-up were handled. Clearly, some lines cross each other in Figure 2.

Response: This point has been included (Please consult lines 115-123; 170-177 of the revised manuscript).

Yours sincerely
Dr. Yuk-Kwan Chen