Author's response to reviews

Title: Views of general practitioners on the role of CA125 in primary care to diagnose ovarian cancer

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

Thank you for again reviewing our manuscript.

**Replies to Reviewer 1**

The aim of the study has been made clearer and more defined:

‘The aim of the study was to ascertain the views of general practitioners (GPs) of NICE guidance on the use of CA125 to triage suspected ovarian cancer cancers and the impact this may have on referral pathways.’

The long sentence identified in paragraph 2 has been spilt into two sentences as suggested.

**Replies to Reviewer 2**

The only significant objection from this reviewer is that ‘altered bowel habit’ was not included as a possible symptom in the original questionnaire. The authors cannot agree with the comment that not including ‘altered bowel habit’ specifically in the questionnaire makes the entire study invalid. The study was aimed at investigating the role of CA125 to triage suspected ovarian cancer cases, it was not ever intended to document all the possible symptoms that may be associated with ovarian cancer. The reviewer does comment that ‘the authors have faithfully incorporated the bullet pointed list produced by the NICE recommendations’.

As we mentioned in our previous reply, bloating was included as a main symptom in the questionnaire and this is the primary symptom associated with irritable bowel syndrome, a common misdiagnosis in ovarian cancer. Unexplained weight loss, loss of appetite and rectal bleeding were also included. The GP experts who piloted the study did not want ‘change in bowel habit’ included since they felt that in the minds of many GPs this symptom would lead to a referral for the investigation of suspected colorectal cancer in preference to ovarian cancer. Unfortunately, the entire study cannot be repeated as suggested by reviewer 2, however a sentence has been added to the discussion as recommended by the reviewer ‘The symptom of ‘altered bowel habit’ was not specifically included in the questionnaire since it was not possible to include an exhaustive list of all the symptoms associated with ovarian cancer and the GP pilot group felt that this was more likely to prompt a referral to investigate the possibility of a colorectal malignancy.’

**Replies to the editor**

I have added a sentence in the methods as requested regarding ethical approval:

‘After discussion with the local research and development representative the study was classified as service evaluation and as such did not require ethical approval.’

Yours sincerely

Esther Moss