Author's response to reviews

Title: The relationship between perceived service quality and patient willingness to recommend at a national oncology hospital network

Authors:

Christopher G Lis (Christopher.lis@ctca-hope.com)
Mark Rodeghier (markrod@xsite.net)
Digant Gupta (gupta_digant@yahoo.com)

Version: 3 Date: 23 January 2011

Author's response to reviews:

January 23, 2011

Dear Dr. Norton,

Greetings,

Thank you for your correspondence in connection with our manuscript (MS:1994522821373951) entitled “The relationship between service quality measures and patient willingness to recommend at a national oncology provider network” for consideration in “BMC Health Services Research”.

We have addressed the reviewers’ concerns in our revised manuscript, which is being resubmitted to “BMC Health Services Research”. Attached below, for your perusal, is a detailed description (highlighted in red and CAPS) of how we have addressed the reviewers’ comments in our revised manuscript. The changes in the resubmitted manuscript have also been highlighted in red for easy identification.

We thank you once again for your interest in our manuscript. We believe that our manuscript has improved substantially as a result of valuable suggestions provided by the reviewers. Please let us know if you have any further questions and we will be more than happy to clarify.

We look forward to hearing back from you soon.

Yours Sincerely,

Digant Gupta, MD, MPH (On behalf of all authors)
Cancer Treatment Centers of America
2610 Sheridan Road
Zion, Illinois 60099, USA
Reviewer's report
Title: The relationship between perceived service quality and patient willingness to recommend at a national oncology hospital network
Version: 2 Date: 5 January 2011
Reviewer: Anna Gagliardi
Reviewer's report:
MAJOR COMPULSORY REVISIONS
The authors have addressed all reviewer comments and the statistical issues noted by the other review and the Discussion section have been substantially revised. There remain two key issues which could have been more explicitly and thoroughly addressed: THANK YOU AGAIN FOR YOUR ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK. PLEASE SEE OUR RESPONSES BELOW.

1/ Introduction - while the authors have expanded on relevant literature in the Discussion section, it was suggested that they do so in the Introduction section. A few details were added to the Introduction but still appear to be unsubstantiated observations without citations. It is crucial in the Introduction to briefly synthesize and analyze current literature to identify gaps in our knowledge that are being addressed by the research described in the manuscript. What did previous cancer service quality surveys find? AS RECOMMENDED, WE HAVE INCLUDED A SUMMARY OF RESULTS FROM PREVIOUS CANCER SERVICE QUALITY SURVEYS IN THE INTRODUCTION SECTION OF THE REVISED PAPER. IN FACT, WE RECENTLY PUBLISHED A REVIEW PAPER ENTITLED "DISTRIBUTION AND DETERMINANTS OF PATIENT SATISFACTION IN ONCOLOGY: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: PATIENT PREFER ADHERENCE. 2009 NOV 3;3:287-304". IN THAT REVIEW PAPER WE HAVE DESCRIBED THE KEY SERVICE QUALITY AREAS THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO CANCER PATIENTS. WE HAVE NOW INCLUDED THIS REVIEW PAPER IN OUR REFERENCE LIST. OUR CURRENT PAPER TAKES THE EXISTING RESEARCH FORWARD BY INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-REPORTED SERVICE QUALITY MEASURES AND WILLINGNESS TO RECOMMEND.

2/ Methodological approach - an un-validated hypothesis generating survey is not a limitation, however, it is crucial to describe how the questions/measures were derived. Perhaps the authors can include details about a model or framework or other surveys upon which they based survey dimensions/questions. WE HAVE INCLUDED THE DETAILS OF WHAT INFORMED OUR SYRVEY DEVELOPMENT. PLEASE SEE PAGE 7 UNDER “QUESTIONNAIRE AND
SURVEY ADMINISTRATION" SECTION. RELEVANT CITATIONS THAT WERE
USED TO HELP CONSTRUCT OUR SURVEY HAVE ALSO BEEN INCLUDED.
PLEASE SEE REFERENCES 18-21.

Reviewer's report
Title: The relationship between perceived service quality and patient willingness
to recommend at a national oncology hospital network
Version: 2 Date: 7 January 2011
Reviewer: Reijo Sund
Reviewer's report:
The manuscript has improved a lot. A few issues, however, should be considered
before publication. THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK WHICH HAS HELPED
US GREATLY TO IMPROVE OUR MANUSCRIPT.

1) Be consistent with separators etc. while writing numbers, i.e. 2018 patients vs
2,018 patients or b = 0.74 vs. b = .74. Check all numbers throughout the
manuscript. AS ADVISED, CONSISTENCY HAS BEEN ENSURED
THROUGHOUT THE MANUSCRIPT.

2) Please discuss the potential selection bias related to response rate. Have you
any idea who did not answer? WE HAVE DISCUSSED THIS UNDER THE
LIMITATION PARAGRAPH OF THE DISCUSSION SECTION OF THE REVISED
PAPER. THE BASELINE CHARACTERISTICS OF PATIENTS WHO DID NOT
RESPOND ARE NOT AVAILABLE FOR US TO EVALUATE ANY SYSTEMATIC
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN RESPONDERS AND NON-RESPONDERS. THIS
HAS ALSO BEEN INCLUDED IN THE LIMITATION PARAGRAPH.

3) Please justify more specifically why you decided to drop just the variables you
dropped because of multicollinearity? Did you consider those to be less
important/interesting among correlated variables? AN EXPLANATION TO THIS
EFFECT HAS BEEN PROVIDED IN THE RESULTS SECTION UNDER
MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS.

4) Select parameterization that offers most information about differences. For
example, try to use the Southwestern Center as a reference center in your
multivariable model - It is likely that Midwestern and Eastern Center differ
significantly from the Southwestern. Or use Eastern Center as a reference if you
want both ORs to be above one. AS RECOMMENDED, WE HAVE NOW USED
SOUTHWESTERN AS THE REFERENCE. WE FOUND MIDWESTERN AND
EASTERN CENTER DIFFERED SIGNIFICANTLY FROM THE
SOUTHWESTERN. THE UPDATED RESULTS ARE PRESENTED IN TABLE 7.

5) Try to put cancer diagnosis to your multivariable model (categorization with
breast, lung, prostate, colorectal, pancreatic, and other should be enough). Does
that change your results, i.e. is satisfaction mainly driven by the condition or is
there an “independent” satisfaction effect regardless of cancer type? AS
SUGGESTED, WE RE-RAN OUR ANALYSIS WITH CANCER DIAGNOSIS. IT WAS NOT FOUND TO BE SIGNIFICANT UPON EITHER UNIVARIATE OR MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS. WE HAVE MENTIONED THIS FINDING IN THE RESULTS SECTION UNDER MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS.

6) Please reword the last sentence in your conclusions. Just tell what can be concluded from your study (instead of describing what you reported in the study). AS SUGGESTED, WE HAVE MODIFIED THE CONCLUSION SECTION TO ONLY REFLECT THE KEY TAKE-HOME MESSAGES OF OUR STUDY.