Author's response to reviews

Title: Inter-jurisdictional cooperation on pharmaceutical product listing agreements: lessons from Canada

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Mr. Danrolf de Jesus,

Thank you for reviewing our paper “Inter-jurisdictional cooperation non pharmaceutical product listing agreements: lessons from Canada”.

The comments provided were very helpful. We have better focused the manuscript and cut the length considerably in doing so. This will certainly improve the impact of this work.

We have addressed all minor and editorial comments of the reviewers. Please find below the specific responses to your suggestions and to the major comments and suggestions of the external reviewers.

Thank you again for considering this paper for publication in BMC Health Services Research.

Sincerely,

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Overall Comments:

1. Please describe the interviewees in more detail. What was their average length of experience in their current position or other experience with drug plan management?

We have provided details about the roles and experience of interviewees (without identifying the provinces) in the methods section on page 4. We have also provided more interview details, including average duration (and range of durations) in the methods section on page 5. The appendix also contains the interview guide.

2. Themes should be highlighted in each section as a sub-title

On revision, the paper is much shorter. We have therefore organized the revised results by major categories (benefits, drawbacks, and barriers) and have divided the “barriers” sub-title into three sections (institutional barriers, political barriers, and resource requirements).
3. Manuscript can be reduced in length.

We have cut approximately 1,500 words from the paper. It is now approximately 2,500 words excluding references and tables.

Reviewer 1:

Give the description of the profiles of responders with keeping them anonymous. On which criteria were selected the responders? Are they homogeneous? What precisely are their role?

Done as per above.

Which other responders could have been interviewed and what is the limit of the choice done?

This is now discussed in the limitations section of the paper.

Why the one who refused to participate has not been replaced by another person?

Though we had not described this well enough before, in all cases, we asked for a delegate from the province to participate in the study. We did follow up if someone was unavailable; however, policy makers in Newfoundland and Labrador declined because the legislation in that province does not permit price negotiation. (We believe that the province may be preparing new legislation on these matters, making this a particularly sensitive policy file at this time.)

Better elaborate the distinction between how to take advantage of cooperation versus how it could be implemented.

We now better clarify our objective of seeking perceptions of the potential benefits, drawbacks and barriers to joint negotiations. Our interviews included questions concerning how policy makers responsible for these negotiations believed the cooperative mechanism should be structured.

We have re-written our discussion and conclusion to be more focused on the specific insights provided to us by policy makers. We do, however, highlight some of the ways that cooperation can be made more compelling in a federation like Canada.

It would be wise to discuss experience of countries such as Italy or Spain and even Germany.
In the introduction and conclusion, we have made reference to the fact that pharmaceutical policy is more devolved in Canada than in other federations that have national agencies involved. Space constraints prevent us from delving further into the comparison of policy structures across countries.

**Reviewer 2:**

To me, the paper reads more like an investigation of why inter-jurisdictional co-operation is unlikely to be successful. While these observations may be important, they might be better framed under an alternative question such as the challenges or barriers to the implementation of a policy initiative.

We humbly agree that the initial framing of the paper was not consistent with the interviews and analysis. We have revised the introduction to be clearer and more focused on questions about policy makers perceptions of the benefits, drawbacks, and barriers of joint negotiations.

Some of the conclusions read more like an essay of investigators’ views rather than flowing from the views expressed in the study.

We have edited the discussion section to be more clearly focused on the study findings and have used the conclusion paper to suggest policy directions that follow form the motivations and challenges identified in our study.

The small number of people interviewed is a substantial limitation of the study. There are concerns about the representativeness of the views expressed.

We have explained our sampling strategy more clearly in the revision and have elaborated on the limitations of this strategy as well as alternative approaches that could be taken.

The abstract refers to international lessons – in my view the international perspective is not well developed in the manuscript.

We have clarified our study objectives as being focused on Canadian policy experience. We draw limited but relevant lessons for cross-national collaboration in the conclusion.

Overall I think the manuscript would benefit from some reorganisation and shortening. In my view these are major compulsory revisions.

As per above, we have cut about 1,500 words from the paper to make it more focused and concise.