Author's response to reviews

Title: Determinants of financial performance of home-visit nursing agencies in Japan.

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Author's response to reviews: see over
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Editor-in-chief

*BMC Health Services Research*

Dear Editor-in-chief,

RE: BMC MS #1223347424105030

Thank you very much for your insightful review of our manuscript entitled “*Determinants of financial performance of home-visit nursing agencies in Japan*”

After considering the two reviewers’ comments carefully, we prepared a revised version of the manuscript.

Following are our responses to the reviewers.

I hope that these revisions are satisfactory and that the revised version will now be acceptable for publication in *BMC Health Services Research*.

We appreciate your further review of this work.

Sincerely yours,

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RE: BMC MS #1223347424105030

Replies to Reviewer 1
Thank you very much for your incisive and helpful comments.

Introduction
1. Please show the reasons why the number of 6,000 and 60,000 are small.
   # We added a reason why the number of 6,000 is small (P4, L10-13). We deleted the sentence indicating the number of 60,000 providers to avoid confusion.
2. Please show the reasons why the limitations of the financial performance are related to the shortage of the number of agencies.
   # We have revised the Introduction to make it clear that the purpose of the study was to examine the determinants of financial performance (agency profitability) based on variables related to management of the agency (P4, L6-P5, L4). In the new Introduction, we rewrote that the shortage in the number of agencies and limitations of the financial performance are not related directly. We also revised the Abstract in accordance with the revised Introduction (P2, L5-12).
3. This reviewer thinks more explanations about the reason why the present study examined the relationship between quality of care and the financial performance might be necessary.
   # As indicated above, we revised the Introduction to clarify the purpose of the study (P4, L6-P5, L4). We also have changed the phrase “quality of care” to “management of the agency” (or similar phrases) throughout the manuscript, based on the second reviewer’s advice.
4. Please describe what is the novelty or originality of this research in comparison to the past related studies.
   # We have revised the Introduction to describe the novelty of the study by comparing with the past related studies (P4, L6-P5, L4).

Statistical analysis
1. Please show the degree of the fitness of the generated multinomial logistic regression model in this study.
   # We added the degree of the fitness ($R^2$ and adjusted $R^2$) of the multinomial logistic regression model in Table 2.

Discussion
1. This author mentioned about the limitation of this study is cross-sectional study. However, in the discussion section, there are some expressions as if the causality is examined in this study (e.g. P11L6-, there also might be the possibility the profitable agencies have surplus for employing the rehabilitation staffs). Therefore some modification of the sentence recommended.
   # As suggested, we revised the sentence to “Thus, it is possible that profitable agencies have a surplus due to employment of rehabilitation staff” (P11, L4-5). We have also revised the Discussion to avoid expressions indicating causality of the results. We underlined all the parts of the revisions throughout the Discussion.

Limitations
1. Please indicate the effect of the limitation (low response rate and cross-sectional study) on the result.
# We have commented on this issue as a limitation in the Discussion (P14, L6-12).

Minor revision

Table 1.

1. Please show the concrete p-value instead of writing it as “NS”.

# We changed “NS” to a p-value in Table 1.

Replies to Reviewer 2

Thank you very much for your insightful comments.

1. The question needs to be clearer. Is the study about profitabilty and quality of care as it related to patient outcomes (quality) or organizational/management quality?

# We have revised the Introduction to make it clear that the purpose of the study was to examine the determinants of financial performance (agency profitability) based on variables related to management of the agency (P4, L6-P5, L4). In addition, we changed the phrase “quality of care” to “management of the agency” (or similar phrases) throughout the manuscript.

2. Throughout the document references to quality, quality of care, quality assurance, "quality control of care" were confusing. What is the definition of quality of care in this paper? Need one definition that needs to be very clear and use it throughout the entire paper.

# As mentioned above, we changed “quality of care” to “management of the agency” throughout the text to clarify the contents of the paper.

3. The aim of the study was not clear. Unclear"aim is to clarify the variables of quality of care etc"? Not sure what that means.

# As indicated in the first reply, we have revised the Introduction to make it clear that the purpose of the study was to examine the determinants of financial performance (agency profitability) based on variables related to management of the agency (P4, L6-P5, L4).

4. It appears that the study was trying to identify characteristics/differences between profitable and unprofitable agencies and the impact on some measure of quality but it was not clear what that was.

# As indicated in replies 1 and 3, we have fully revised the Introduction (P4, L1-P5, L4).

5. Some of the written English needs attention for example in abstract "Due to 'stagnant' number of home visits"...what does this mean; page 9, 3rd paragraph; areas on page 11; page 14 and essentially throughout the document. The English needs revision.

# The text has been revised with checking by a native-English speaker.