Author's response to reviews

Title: Doctor and practice characteristics associated with differences in patient evaluations of general practice

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Author’s response to reviews: see over
Cover letter after second revision of the manuscript:

Dear editor

We have now tried our best to revise our manuscript according to the reviewers’ comments. Below this letter we provide our comments to referee 1.

Besides the revisions brought about by the referee’s comments, we have rearranged a few paragraphs and once again put the manuscript through language corrections.

I hope this revision have rendered the manuscripts satisfactory enough to be considered for publication.

Yours sincerely
on behalf of the authors

Dr. Hanne Heje

Replies to the comments of referee 1 after first revision:

Major revision:

The referee wrote: “The authors have not addressed my comment 5 which read: “The policy or clinical or professional significance of the study should be set out upfront in the introduction section. Accordingly, the study purpose (which should be distinguished from study objectives) needs to be set out in the upfront section. As of now, it is not clear what the authors seek to contribute to the field in terms of directions for action, by carrying out this study.”

I believe this is a substantive concern which needs to be addressed. The policy or professional significance of the study and its findings is what makes health services research relevant for publication and for the readership. Although the authors have now indicated the general study purpose, the introduction section still lacks the content needed to make out a case for the study, nor does it spell out what is hoped to be accomplished by studying the association between patient perceptions of care dimensions and GP characteristics. Any past literature on this type of study or related topic should also be cited if available, and an indication of how this study addresses the gaps in current knowledge, relevant for policy/practice should be presented. Similarly, in the “Discussion” section, the policy or practice significance of the statistical findings and consequent recommendations for policy makers and/or professionals are not discussed."

We have strived to respond to the reviewers objections by tightening up the introductory section according to the comments. We have pointed out the significance and the study purpose in more clear terms and related more directly to this in the discussion section.

Minor revisions:

1. The referee wrote: “In the Methods section, the authors should provide a section defining “dependent variables of interest” and the “independent variables of interest”. Currently, the text is worded as if all GP variables are control variables. (The results section and the study objective treat these as the independent variables of interest.) To show that each effect is an adjusted effect accounting for the remaining variables,
they should mention this in the results section.

We agree that this should be clearly pointed out in the manuscript. The analyses section has been rewritten in order to make the background for our choice of adjusting variables more clear. These variables are also listed in the legends for the tables, but we chose not to repeat it in too many words in the results section.

2. The referee wrote: “The original manuscript as well as the revised one cause confusion about whether it is univariate or multivariate analysis because the title is cryptic. Detailed description of the statistical methods in the revised manuscript clarifies that Table 3 actually shows adjusted prevalence ratios. However, each table needs to stand on its own to explain what it represents. I suggest revising the table title to say something like: “Adjusted associations between patient opinions about care dimensions and GP characteristics: Findings of Multivariate analysis”.

With our revision of the analyses section we also intended to clarify if an analysis was univariate or multivariate. We introduced an explanation to the analyses in the “Legends for Tables 3-7”. This sentence may also be transferred as a headline to each table.

3. The referee wrote. “Statistical analysis: In general, the current explanation of methods makes sense. However I am not a statistician, and I suggest a statistical review for appropriateness of the specific method used for each regression.”

The analyses were conducted by one of the co-authors who is a skilled statistician. The statistical methods that were used for our analyses are well documented and relatively uncomplicated.