Author's response to reviews

Title: Priority Setting in the Provincial Health Services Authority: survey of key decision makers

Authors:

Flora Teng (flora.teng@gmail.com)
Craig Mitton (craig.mitton@ubc.ca)
Jennifer Mackenzie (mackenzie@phsa.ca)

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Dr Chrissie Kouremenou
Senior Assistant Editor
editorial@biomedcentral.com

MS: 1940291956127813

Dear Dr. Kouremenou,

Thank you for the opportunity to revise our manuscript entitled, “Priority Setting in the Provincial Health Services Authority: survey of key decision makers.” In this cover letter I include a point by point response to the reviewers’ comments.

Reviewer 1

*Justification for choice of two agencies in addition to PHSA Executive.*

- added sentence in 1st paragraph under ‘Study design and sample’ on pg. 3, indicating that there was a willingness of the respective senior executives in the two agencies to participate in the research and that both agencies had an openness to change their priority setting practices based on historical/political patterns

*Lack of clarity with Accountability for Reasonableness.*

- a footnote has been added on pg. 17 providing the reader with a brief description of the Accountability for Reasonableness terms used in the Interview Guide

*Statement of inter-observer reliability of coding*

- we did not actually calculate this, although in hindsight it would have been a good thing to do; nonetheless, minimal discrepancies arose in the coding. We have expanded our explanation of this in the 4th paragraph on pg. 4

*Difficulty in reconciling what is reported in this paper with another recent publication describing a more formal approach to priority setting taken up in this organization*

- changed the wording in 3rd para pg. 2 to be more clear that the current paper is reporting on past/historical practices in the PHSA
- first paragraph top of pg. 4 now states that the responses provide insight into priority setting practices prior to Summer 2004, and again re-emphasize this point in 1st para under the Results
- finally, reference 30 in the version of the manuscript that was reviewed should have been our paper the reviewer refers to from Healthcare Policy; this has now been corrected, with the Berwick reference being shifted to ref. 31 (in the reference list and the text, top pg. 11)
Reviewer 2

More details on health care funding and PHSA responsibility.

- these issues have been expanded on bottom pg. 2/ first two paragraphs on pg. 3

Uniquess of PHSA thus no surprise that this is the first time such work has been done in a provincial health authority in Canada

- good point... we have changed the wording in the 3rd paragraph pg. 10 to indicate that we are bringing the perspective of a provincial health authority to the literature

Limitations section could be deleted apart from first sentence

- in an attempt to be clear about the limitations we have left three sentences there, but have taken out two sentences that certainly would be picked up by the reader and thus agreed were not needed

Add in something about transferability to the US

- this has been done on pg. 11 under the Transferability section