Author's response to reviews

Title: Does delayed measurement effect patient reports of provider performance? Implications for performance measurement of medical assistance with tobacco cessation: A Dental PBRN study

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Author's response to reviews: see over
RE: MS: 7781311861618789

Please find attached our revisions based on the first review of the following manuscript:


We have responded to each of the reviewer’s critiques below and have noted where changes were made in the manuscript. As we discussed by email, we have deleted Figure 1 and replaced with a Table as the reviewer suggests. We believe that the secondary analysis of practice performance rank adds value to the manuscript and hope that the changes we have made add clarity. If the editor and reviewer feel strongly again that this should be removed, we are willing to revise again without the analysis of changes in practice performance rank.

Reviewer #1

1. Be consistent in how you refer to the practices for THIS study – you have 60 practices, they are neither intervention nor control in THIS study. On page 4 they are referred to in one place as 60 intervention and control, and another place as 60 no-intervention (control). They are neither -- they are 60 practices who were originally recruited for another study.

We apologize for the inconsistency. In the prior critiques, we were asked to expand our discussion of the parent randomized trial. However, it seems that this created confusion and was not well integrated. We now refer to the analysis reported as THIS study, and clarify that it is a sub-study of the randomized trial. The randomized trial is referred to as the randomized trial (see pages 4 and 5).

We have clarified throughout that there are 60 practices total. These practices were the first 60 randomized to control. We have clarified that these practices are non-intervention practices, with respect to the larger study. Please see changes on pages 2, 4, 5, 8, 8, and 10.

2. SEPARATE your discussion of the original study and THIS study. On page 4 you say that “We conducted a randomized trial” – this may be true of the study from which the practices were recruited, but not for THIS study that you are reporting on. This is confusing.
We have now tried to achieve a description of the parent randomized trial and differentiate it from this study in the methods on pages 4 and 5. We hope these changes provide enough information on the randomized trial without confusing the picture.

3. Figure 1 is confusing and does not add to the importance of your findings. What this study is about is the inconsistency of self-report, immediate compared to later in time. This is an important issue – what how the changes in self-report differed by practice is not so important. One would think that practice factors would not influence recall. However, if insist on keeping this in I would suggest that, instead of figure 1, provide a table showing how practice percentiles changed and which changes were significant.

As the reviewer has asked, we have removed Figure 1. I agree that our study is about "the inconsistency of self-report, immediate compared to later in time." However, we also feel that the change in rank by practice, comparing immediate and delayed, is an important implication of this study. Since patient reports are now being used to make decisions about practice performance, the fact that changes in self-report by time impact rank adds value to the current study. Thus, as the reviewer recommended, we have replaced the figure with a table (see Table 3) showing how practice percentiles changed, and changed our results to reflect this analysis of quartiles (pages 10 and 11).

4. The sentence on page 7 starting with “Thus for ‘ask’ patients” makes no sense.

We have edited this sentence for clarity, and split into two sentences (See Page 7).