Author's response to reviews

Title: How risky is caring for emergency patients at risk of malpractice litigation: a population based epidemiological study of Taiwan's experiences

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Dear Editor and Reviewers:

Thank you for your assistance and most insightful comments. We have revised the article according to your suggestions. The point to point responses are as follows.

1. The inclusion criterion was set to be incidents transpired in the time period of 1998 to 2002. However, the study materials include the district court decision database from 1999 to 2006. First of all, there is no telling as to when the disgruntled patient or family will take the case to court so long as the statute of limitation has not run out. Secondly, it takes time for the department of health to produce expert reports and the legal proceedings are time consuming as well. Therefore, a two to three years’ time lag between the occurrence of an unsatisfactory medical event and the first court judgment is a reasonable expectation. In order to capture all the lawsuits, the time lag is necessary. And the database is up-to-date until 2006. We have tried to state our design more clearly in the abstract and the method section (pp.6-7).

2. As to the references, we have increased the number of cited references to 24 and most of them were published in 2008-2009.

3. The possible outcome for doctors who are criminally charged is further elaborated on p. 10. In short, most of them got plea bargain or probation in the end.

4. The conclusion starting from p.14 has been tripled in length to include more substance.

Sincerely,

Che-Ming Yang