Author's response to reviews

Title: The Chernobyl Childhood Leukemia Study: Background & Lessons Learned

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Version: 4  Date: 20 October 2004

Author's response to reviews: see over
October 20, 2004

Dear Drs. Grandjean and Ozonoff:

We are pleased to report back on our modifications to our manuscript entitled “Lessons Learned from our Childhood Leukemia Study in Chernobyl.” We were most gratified to receive the positive comments from the third and final reviewer and have dutifully responded to each one of his concerns. Moreover, we have addressed those editorial matters that you related to us in your e-mail of October 8.

Editorial/Reviewer Comments:

1. All unnecessary capitalization has been removed from the title.
2. Full addresses have now been provided for all authors.
3. All hyphens have been removed from line breaks.
4. The abstract has been significantly reduced.
5. All double spaces between words have been removed.
6. Per the editors’ request, we have put the word “and” between “collaborators” and “then”.
7. In the very last sentence of the paper, before the references, we have changed “is” to “are”.
8. The list of abbreviations has been added to the end of the main text without starting a new page.
9. The entire paper is now, per the editors’ instructions, double-spaced, even the references.
10. We have now bolded the heading of the reference section and the figure number and title and the table number and title.
11. A figure legend is now immediately following figure title and not in a separate section
12. Reference 6 has now been corrected.
13. Figure 1 has been cropped and adjusted per your request.
14. We have also responded to the various concerns brought to our attention by the third reviewer. Specifically:
15. Reference 10 has been cited on page 3, per the reviewers request.
16. On page 4, first paragraph the term “cohort/study size” has been replaced with “sample size”.
17. The term oblast has now been defined.
18. We have modified the phrase on page 5 that stated “…English would be used progressively” to now read “English would be used as the common language which was”. This more clearly describes what was actually done.
18. The reviewer requested additional detail be provided about changes in leadership on page 7. These changes were mentioned on page 6 and there is no need to provide additional information.

19. The reviewer suggests that it might be interesting to hear more about how local culture either contributes to or hinders high participation rates. We agree that this would be an interesting ethnographic study, but that is beyond the scope of our current report. Thus, the ethnographic description may be reported on in the future.

20. The reviewer asked what the pluses are for using physician interviewers. The advantages are cited on page 10 as “…credible representatives, were respected by study participants, and could be depended on to provide accurate and verifiable data”.

21. The reviewer inquires whether back translation of the questionnaires was performed. We have now added a sentence on page 10 that states “Instruments were back translated into English to assure accuracy of translation.”

22. The reviewer asks whether local official were also wary of dealing with foreigners. The answer to this is no and we do not see the necessity of including a discussion of this in the paper.

We appreciate the various comments and concerns made by the third reviewer, as well as by the editor. We believe that we have been responsive to all suggestions and that they have further strengthened our presentation and will enhance the utility of our lessons to the readership. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Martin C. Mahoney, MD, PhD