Author’s response to reviews

Title: A double-blind, randomized controlled, prospective trial assessing the effectiveness of oral corticoids in the treatment of symptomatic lumbar stenosis

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Author’s response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor,

We would like to thank the opportunity and to inform you that we have made the changes suggested by the reviewers. We are also available to make any other changes that you find necessary.

Below we are sending a point to point answer to the reviewers comments.

Yours faithfully,

The Authors
Dear Reviewer 1,

We appreciate all the recommendations and observations made and answering your question we agree that follow-up time was small, but as the result was negative, probably more time of follow-up would not change our conclusions.

Yours Faithfully,
The Authors

POINT BY POINT ANSWER

Reviewer's report:
Author said that the patients were assessed at four different times (initially and at 3, 6 and 12 weeks). This follow-up time is very short if the effectiveness of medicine is evaluated.

ANSWER: we agree that follow-up duration of our study was short and since our results were negative, probably more follow-up time would not change our conclusions.
Dear Reviewer 2,

Thank you for the recommendations and observations made.

We follow your recommendations and made the changes suggested.

We diminished the size of the text considerably removing a lot of extra information. About your guidance, we added information concerned to the conservative treatment and indication of surgery in cases of severe stenosis and the mentioned references were inserted on the text.

We removed the charts #1 and #2 and the chart #3 was renamed as chart #1. About the discussion, we put more information regarding the relation with obesity and its association with the worst prognostic and why probably the oral corticoid was not effective, once the stenosis is a mechanical problem and not inflammatory.

Yours Faithfully
The Authors

POINT BY POINT ANSWERS

Reviewer's report:
The authors honestly reported the ineffectiveness of oral steroids for lumbar spinal stenosis (LSS), although repeated epidural or nerve root steroid injections are reported to be effective. They also reported obesity made clinical symptoms worse.

This paper is too long and full of irrelevant details (i.e. general information of LSS, unnecessary statistic value, L4/5 as most affected and etc.). Tables are repetitive of the text without summarizing the content. This paper is not publishable in its current form.

However, I think if the author improved the readability (i.e. shortening the introduction and the discussion more clear, summarizing methods and results, and making the tables clear), it would be some of interest.

ANSWER – we thanks the reviewer for the kinds comments. We removed from the manuscript a lot of extra information.

BACKGROUND
General information of LSS is excessive. It is better to describe the definition of LSS in this study, because there is no complete agreement on it. The following would be of interest to readers.

More than half of the patients with LSS were successfully treated without surgery.

In cases of severe LSS, surgery is recommended.


Surgical results of LSS are the same in patients over 75 as of 65-75

(Arinzon ZH, Arch Gerontol Geriatr 2003)

**ANSWER – we removed some information from the manuscript and added the papers recommended.**

**METHODS, RESULTS, TABLES**

I recommend the authors made them more concise. Standard errors and insignificant p-values are not necessary. The authors should pay more attention on significant figures. I cannot understand the need of Table 1 and 2.

Backgrounds of patients should be summarized in one table. Graphs better express results. The authors should clearly show the relation between obesity (i.e. BMI) and symptoms.

**ANSWER – We tried to make the text more concise. The tables 1 and 2 were removed, and the baseline data were summarized in one table. The correlation between obesity and symptoms was more explored.**

**DISCUSSION**

It is better to be focused on fewer topics. The following should be discussed; 1) the reason why oral steroids were not effective although local steroid injections were reported to be effective, 2) the reason why obesity caused symptoms worse

**ANSWER – We improve the discussion sections following the topics suggested by the reviewer.**