Author's response to reviews

Title: Quality comparison of electronic versus paper death certificates (France - 2010)

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Answers to the reviewers

We are very grateful to the referees for their recommendations. The proposed modifications are shown below, and underlined in the manuscript.

Referee 4

The revised manuscript is much improved. However, tables 2 and 3 still appear to be a little confusing. It would be helpful for the authors to layout the exact models and what variables are in each. Would the authors be able to present more specifically the results for each models by columns (i.e. one model in one column). It is particularly important to clarify the model specification here because the interpretation of RN (or RR in Table 3) hinges on the particular “reference group” (i.e. the intercept). RN=1/RR=1 generally indicates the reference group, however, in multivariate analysis, because of the inclusion of multiple covariates and interaction terms, the reference group is not necessarily the alternative age group or alternative type group, but a group with some hybrid characteristics e.g. alternative age group + alternative type + other variables which has the value 0. In the current presentation of the tables it is hard to tell exactly which reference group that RR and RN is contrasting with. For example, for the all age model, if age is controlled (say <65 is represented by dummy = 1, >65 is represented by dummy = 0) and type is contrast (say electronic = 1, paper = 0), and there is an interaction term between type and age. The reference group would be “paper, >65,” the RN would be interpreted with respect to this reference group.

The table shows results on “paper, <65" vs "electronic, <65" and "paper, >65" vs "electronic, >65." Are these interaction terms or are these results from separate models? If models were ran separately for the two age groups, then age should NOT be a covariate in the model. From the current presentation of the tables, it is difficult to tell the exact model specification.

Thank you for your comment. Indeed, the tables were not clear, as they concatenated very similar results from 2 different models.

We clarified in the method section the related paragraph (page 8, line 25) as follows: "As multiple pathologies frequently affect old people and because one unique underlying cause of death is harder to determine in this population [22], interaction was tested between type of death certificates and age. Given its statistical significance, age-specific type of death certificate effects were estimated in both models."

In order to clarify the tables 2 and 3, results of the models with and without age-specific type of death certificate effects were shown in separated columns, and footnotes were modified in accordance.