Author's response to reviews

Title: The impact of herpes zoster and post-herpetic neuralgia on quality-of-life

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Thursday, 11 March 2010

Dear Dr. Cassady-Cain,

Thank you again for your interest in our manuscript "The impact of herpes zoster and post-herpetic neuralgia on quality-of-life", and for the positive review of our submission.

We have responded to each of the comments of the reviewer, as detailed on the following pages, and have modified the manuscript in a few places, marking the changes in bold text.

We hope that you will now find this manuscript suitable for publication in BMC Medicine. I remain available for any further questions you may have.

Yours sincerely,

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Response to reviewer's comments regarding manuscript entitled, "The impact of herpes zoster and post-herpetic neuralgia on quality-of-life".

Reviewer #1, only minor suggestions given:

1. pg 3. Change commonest to most common
   Response: Done, indicated in bold.

2. pg 5. The authors note alldynia may predict a higher risk of developing PHN. What are other risk factors?
   Response:
   The reviewer is right to point out that certain other risk factors have been identified. These include presence of prodromal pain, severity of acute pain, severity of rash, age >50 and ophthalmic localisation (HZO) (Choo et al 1997; Whitley 1998; Jung et al 2004; Volpi et al 2008; Pavan-Langston 2000). The following text was added to the paper:

   Other PHN predictive factors include presence of prodromal pain, severity of rash, severity of pain and ophthalmic localization (Choo et al 1997; Whitley 1998; Jung et al 2004; Volpi et al 2008; Pavan-Langston 2000).

3. pg 8. Could the authors expand the section on non-pain symptoms and complications to include the increased risk of stroke within the first year of HZ?
   Response: We agree with this suggestion, particularly in the light of 2 recent publications on this subject (Kang et al, 2009; Lin et al. 2010). We have added the following text to the manuscript:

   HZ patients may also be at greater risk of stroke. Two recent retrospective population-based studies in Taiwan found that HZ and herpes zoster ophthalmicus patients had a 1.31-fold and 4.52-fold higher risk of stroke, respectively, in the following year (Kang et al 2009; Lin et al, 2010).

   Response: Done

5. pg 9. A reference to (Merck data on file) is incomplete. Please provide complete reference.
   Response: We have added a reference for this data (McElhaney 2010).

6. pg 10. The inequality sign is pointing the wrong way. Please change <50 to >50 years.
   Response: Done.

   Response: We have added this reference to Table 4.

8. pg 11. Please complete citation for Weinke et al., (line 26).
   Response: This has been completed as follows:

9. pg 23. Concerning references 43 – 45, an abstract should be cited in the text as 'personal communication' and not listed in the References section and thus giving the non-reviewed abstract the same weight as a peer-reviewed paper.

Response:
With the publication of Weinke et al 2010 (see previous comment) references 43 and 44 (abstracts) could be removed as the data they refer to are contained within that paper. The references have been reformatted accordingly.

However, we would prefer to retain reference 45 (abstract) in the reference list as this is a publication in the public domain, like, for example, ref 22.

Reviewer #2: no suggested changes.