Author’s response to reviews

Title: Pharmacist Intervention in the Prevention of Heart Failure for high-risk Elderly Patients in the Community

Authors:

Vivian Lee (vivianlee@cuhk.edu.hk)
Libby Choi (libbychoimingshan@hotmail.com)
Winki Wong (winkiwongjoy@hotmail.com)
Ho Wing Chung (kei31070@hotmail.com)
Carman Ng (ngkm4391@hotmail.com)
Franco Cheng (francokcheng@gmail.com)

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Responses to Comments from Reviewers:

Reviewer #2: General Comments

The manuscript describes an uncontrolled cohort study of 103 patients with recent symptoms of heart failure and their response to targeted visits from pharmacists. Participants were visited every 3-4 months over what appears to have been a 6-7 month period. Measurements of hypertension, blood glucose, blood lipids and signs and symptoms of heart failure and medicinal compliance were taken at baseline and at follow-up visits. Heart failure symptomology, LDL-cholesterol and triglyceride levels were found to be significantly improved at latest visit, as was medication compliance.

- Reviewing the MS would be easier if the pages, not just the lines, were numbered.

Response: Thank you for your comments. The page numbers were added to the manuscript.

* Some justification of the chosen study design would be appropriate.

A cross-over study design of medication only followed by POS might have been an ethically acceptable alternative? Some of the claims made in the Results and Conclusions would be much more robustly supported if a control arm was included in the study.

Response: Thank you for your comments. We have also considered adding a control group in our project. However, our project partners in the community centers refused to have the control
groups in their centers. They commented that all their subjects in their centers demanded to be informed and assessed by pharmacists about their heart failure conditions. Therefore, it was not ethical to have a control group in this case.

* Please include a statistical power calculation in the Methods section.

Response: Thank you for your comments. The sample size calculation has been added to the Methods section.

* What allowance for the influence of multiple statistical testing was made?

Response: Thank you for your comments. We allowed multiple statistical analysis whenever it was necessary.

* If the "latest visits" did not all occur at approximately the same time interval after the baseline visit (this is not explicit in the Methods section), then perhaps a statistical analysis including time dependent variables is appropriate?

Response: Thank you for your comments. This is a great suggestion. When we conducted the statistical analysis, we compared the subjects with both baseline and final visit completed data.

* Was the Questionnaire meant to be included as Supplementary Information?

Response: Thank you for your comments. We will move the questionnaire as the supplementary information.

Specific comments

Abstract

Methods/Line 2 and throughout

Elderly's → elderly patients'

Response: Thank you for your comments. We have amended the manuscript according to the reviewer’ suggestions.

Results/Line 6

Morisky score → Morisky Medication Adherence Scale

Response: Thank you for your comments. We have amended the manuscript according to the reviewer’ suggestions.
Introduction

Page 1/Line 2
Heart Failure (HF) has… → Heart Failure (HF) is

Response: Thank you for your comments. We have amended the manuscript according to the reviewer’ suggestions.

Page 1/Line 4
United States… → United States of America

Response: Thank you for your comments. We have amended the manuscript according to the reviewer’ suggestions.

Page 1/Line 12
..that population.. → ..that the population..

Response: Thank you for your comments. We have amended the manuscript according to the reviewer’ suggestions.

Page 1/Line 16
..improved living standard. → …improved living standards.

Response: Thank you for your comments. We have amended the manuscript according to the reviewer’ suggestions.

Page 1/Line 24
… Heart Failure Society.. → …the Heart Failure Society..

Response: Thank you for your comments. We have amended the manuscript according to the reviewer’ suggestions.

Page 1/Lines 36-48
The sentence:
Moreover … community elderly.
Should be shortened, simplified or broken up.
Response: Thank you for your comments. We have amended the manuscript according to the reviewer’ suggestions.

Page 1/Line 50
CHF → HF
Response: Thank you for your comments. We have amended the manuscript according to the reviewer’ suggestions.

Page 1/Line 52
…that pharmacy … → …that a pharmacy …
Response: Thank you for your comments. We have amended the manuscript according to the reviewer’ suggestions.
Response: Thank you for your comments. We have amended the manuscript according to the reviewer’ suggestions.

Page 2/Line 1
…in early… → …in the early…
Response: Thank you for your comments. We have amended the manuscript according to the reviewer’ suggestions.

Page 2/Line 29-38
references for Joint National Committee 7; Standard of Medical Care in Diabetes 2012; ATP III?
There are citations in the footnotes of Tables 1 & 3, but no corresponding references in the Reference list?
Response: Thank you for your comments. We have amended the manuscript according to the reviewer’ suggestions.

Page 2/Line 25
Delete "namely"

Response: Thank you for your comments. We have amended the manuscript according to the reviewer’ suggestions.

Page 3/Line 21-33

Delete "It is claimed in the product guideline that the "test strips are plasma referenced in line with the recommendations of the International Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (IFCC)". Hence, the test strips of the meter will illustrate results that are equivalent to the glucose concentration in plasma. As a result, Accu-Chek® Performa should be suitable for measurement of plasma glucose in the study."

Response: Thank you for your comments. We have amended the manuscript according to the reviewer’ suggestions.

Page 3/Line 35

…with CardioChek®… → …with a CardioChek®…

Response: Thank you for your comments. We have amended the manuscript according to the reviewer’ suggestions.

Page 3/Line 56

…corresponding to NYHA.. → …corresponding to the NYHA..

Response: Thank you for your comments. We have amended the manuscript according to the reviewer’ suggestions.

Page 3/Line 59-61

compliance by Morisky 8-item Medication Adherence Scale were performed at the first and the last visit.

→

compliance by the Morisky 8-item Medication Adherence Scale were performed at the first and last visit.

Response: Thank you for your comments. We have amended the manuscript according to the reviewer’ suggestions.
Page 4/Line 1 and Throughout (in relation to follow-up visits)

Latest or last?

Response: Thank you for your comments. It should be the “last”. We have amended the manuscript already.

Page 4/Line 4

..for assessment.. → ..for the assessment..

Response: Thank you for your comments. We have amended the manuscript according to the reviewer’s suggestions.

Results

Page 4/Line 16

Don’t start sentence with a numeral.

Response: Thank you for your comments. We have amended the manuscript according to the reviewer’s suggestions.

Page 4/Line 30-35

The grammar and tense of this sentence needs improving to provide unambiguous meaning.

In addition, it was found that number of subjects experienced 4 or more symptoms had a significant reduction by 15 (21.74%) (p=0.001, Table 2).

Response: Thank you for your comments. We have amended the manuscript according to the reviewer’s suggestions.

Page 4/Lines 42-50

How can it be claimed that intervention by the pharmacists made a difference, and not adherence to medication with or without a pharmacist, when there is no control (medication only) group?

Response: Thank you for your comments. We agree your comment that the difference observed may not be solely due to the pharmacist’s intervention. We just documented the change before and after the pharmacists’ interventions. We added the statement stating the observation may not be solely from the pharmacists’ interventions.
Discussion

Page 5/Lines 47-57

The grammar and tense of this sentence needs improving to provide unambiguous meaning.

Thank you for your comments. We have amended the manuscript according to the reviewer’s suggestions.

Page 6/Line 1

In addition, pharmacist role… → In addition, a/the? pharmacist role…

Thank you for your comments. We have amended the manuscript according to the reviewer’s suggestions.

Page 6/Line 53-56

It cannot be claimed that intervention by the pharmacists made a difference, and not compliance with medication with or without a pharmacist, when there is no control (medication only, no-POS) group? Very likely it did, but comparison of with and without pharmacist intervention would confirm this.

Response: Thank you for your comments. We agree your comment that the difference observed may not be solely due to the pharmacist’s intervention. We just documented the change before and after the pharmacists’ interventions. We added the statement stating the observation may not be solely from the pharmacists’ interventions.

Page 7/Line 1

The current heart failure questionnaire was developed for this study… → The current heart failure questionnaire developed for this study…

Response: Thank you for your comments. We have amended the manuscript according to the reviewer’s suggestions.

Reviewer #3: The manuscript is very interesting and applicable to all clinicians who are dealing with heart failure.

I would be grateful if you could delete the word "uncontrolled" and replace it with "non compliant" or "not well controlled" where appropriate.
Response: Thank you for your comments. We have amended the manuscript according to the reviewer’ suggestions.

Furthermore, please put the limitations on a separate paragraph because that is how it should be.

Response: Thank you for your comments. We have amended the manuscript according to the reviewer’ suggestions.