Author’s response to reviews

Title: Consent to Data Linkage in a Large Online Epidemiological Survey of 18-23 Year Old Australian Women in 2012-13

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Version: 2 Date: 12 Nov 2019

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REQUESTED REVISIONS:

As I mentioned above, I was a little confused about which level of consent was being discussed. That should be clarified early in the ms.

RESPONSE TO REVIEWER:

We have tried to clarify the level of consent that is being examined in this paper. This has been done in the abstract background and the methods section.

REQUESTED REVISIONS:

I would like to see some more of the CART details, split and pruning and diagnostics spelled out in the text.

RESPONSE TO REVIEWER:

Details of the splitting rules, pruning method and misclassification diagnostic value have been added.
ADDITIONAL REQUESTS/SUGGESTIONS:

As I mentioned above, especially with regard to clarification of consent level which is being modeled, and CART analysis details.

RESPONSE TO REVIEWER:

Clarification of the data linkage consent which is being modeled and CART analysis details have been added.

ADDITIONAL REQUESTS/SUGGESTIONS:

-In addition, I would like to see something like an "Objectives" section in the Abstract which clearly spells out the goals of the paper. This is different from the "Methods" section, which is where the mention of CART should first be introduced, not in the Results section.

RESPONSE TO REVIEWER:

A sentence on the goals of the paper has been added to the background section of the abstract.

ADDITIONAL REQUESTS/SUGGESTIONS:

-Maybe it is there and I overlooked it, apologies, but I would like to see a statement(s) along the lines that makes it clear if what they are talking about ("consent to data linkage") is actually their shorthand but very "weedy" way of referring to consent to enter the longitudinal cohort.

RESPONSE TO REVIEWER:

We have clarified in the methods section by adding these sentences: “The outcome of consent examined in this study refers to the consent to data linkage, measured at the end of the online survey. Participants were asked for consent to data linkage with administrative datasets. They were not asked for consent to participate in the online survey, because implicit consent is assumed through the completion of the online survey.”
ADDITIONAL REQUESTS/SUGGESTIONS:

-I would carefully look at the language throughout but especially in the Conclusions section of the abstract to better qualify some of their assertions. For example, they state "Ensuring that prospective participants [of what, the data linkage part or the longitudinal study enrollment? Is that the same thing?] understand the consent and privacy protocols in place to protect their confidential information [the authors tell us at the end of the paper that they actually DON'T have a consent discussion?] builds confidence in the research process." I would probably take a fresh look at how best to word their remarks throughout about what consents are being talked about both in the field and here in the paper. Otherwise, it was an interesting read and I wish the authors well!

RESPONSE TO REVIEWER:

We have clarified that we are talking about consent to data linkage up front and we have changed the language used throughout to make sure that our assertions are backed up by our findings and revised any potential over-assertions.

Many thanks to the reviewer for your helpful suggestions and constructive requested revisions. We hope that our changes improve the paper.