Author’s response to reviews

Title: General practitioners referring patients to specialists in tertiary healthcare: a qualitative study

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Assistant Editor,

Thank you for your feedback and for your comments on our manuscript “General practitioners referring patients to specialists in tertiary healthcare: a qualitative study” (FAMP-D-19-00002R1). We modified the text accordingly. The manuscript is resubmitted, including these modifications.

In the following text, you can find our responses regarding your comments and the reviewer’s comments. The pages and the lines indicated into this text are referring to our resubmitted paper. We should be grateful if you would consider these modifications.

Yours sincerely,
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Reviewer reports
1 Consent to Participate:
Please confirm in the section 'Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate' whether informed consent, written or verbal, was obtained from all participants and clearly state this in your manuscript. If verbal, please state the reason and whether the ethics committee approved this procedure. If the need for consent was waived by an IRB or is deemed unnecessary according to national regulations, please clearly state this, including the name of the IRB or a reference to the relevant legislation.

Authors’ response: We have modified the paragraph “Ethics approval and consent to participate” accordingly (see first paragraph of “Declarations”, pp. 11-12).

2 Authors Contributions:
- Please include an authors’ contributions section under 'declarations'.
- Please represent authors’ names using their full initials, not their full name, in the Authors’ Contributions section. If there are any duplicated initials, please differentiate them to make it clear that the initials refer to separate authors.
- Please include a statement in the Authors’ contributions section to the effect that all authors have read and approved the manuscript, and ensure that this is the case.

Authors’ response: We have included an “Authors’ contributions” section to the manuscript, including the requested statement (see p. 12, lines 18-26).

3 Funding declarations:
- All sources of funding for the research reported should be declared. The role of the funding body in the design of the study and collection, analysis, and interpretation of data and in writing the manuscript should be declared. If no funding was obtained for this study, please state so in this section.
- We appreciate that a statement providing funding information may already be present. Please move/copy the statement to the Funding sub-section instead, and include any additional relevant information.

Authors’ response: No funding was obtained for this study. We have added this statement, as requested, to the manuscript (see p. 12, lines 15-16).

4 Abbreviations:
If abbreviations are used in the text they should be defined in the text at first use, and a list of abbreviations should be provided in the Declarations.

Authors’ response: A list of abbreviations is provided under the heading “Declarations” (see p. 13, lines 5-10).

5 Consent for Publication:
We note that you have included a ‘Consent for publication’ section in the Declarations. Consent for publication refers to consent for the publication of identifying images or other personal or clinical details of participants that compromise anonymity. Seeing as this is not applicable to your manuscript please state “Not Applicable” in this section.

Authors’ response: We have revised the manuscript accordingly (see p. 12, line 6-7).
At this stage, please upload your manuscript as a single, final, clean version that does not contain any tracked changes, comments, highlights, strikethroughs or text in different colors. All relevant tables/figures/additional files should also be clean versions. Figures (and additional files) should remain uploaded as separate files. Please ensure that all figures, tables and additional/supplementary files are cited within the text.

Authors’ response: A single, final version of the manuscript has been uploaded.

Please specify in your response that you have permission to use full names under 'Acknowledgements'.

Authors’ response: Permission is granted to use full names under 'Acknowledgements' (see last paragraph of page 12).

Please remove the additional file 'corrections'.

Authors’ response: The file has been removed.

Reviewer #2 (Reviewer 3) | Merethe Andersen

**OBJECTIVE** - Full research articles: is there a clear objective that addresses one or several testable research questions? (Brief or other article types: is there a clear objective?)

Yes - there is a clear objective

**DESIGN** - Is the current approach (including controls and analysis protocols) appropriate for the objective?

Yes - the approach is appropriate

**EXECUTION** - Are the experiments and analyses performed with sufficient technical rigor to allow confidence in the results?

Yes - experiments and analyses were performed appropriately

**STATISTICS** - Is the use of statistics in the manuscript appropriate?

Yes - appropriate statistical analyses have been used in the study

**INTERPRETATION** - Is the current interpretation/discussion of the results reasonable and not overstated?

Yes - the author's interpretation is reasonable
OVERALL MANUSCRIPT POTENTIAL - Has the author addressed your concerns sufficiently for you to now recommend the work as a technically sound contribution? If not, can further revisions be made to make the work technically sound?
Yes - current version is technically sound

Authors’ response: We thank the reviewer for his overall positive feedback.

GENERAL COMMENTS: This is an interesting paper and the authors have done a good job of responding to the previous reviewer comments. The most significant limitation of this paper has to do with the lack of generalizability given the study sample. That seriously limits the contribution of this work.
Authors’ response: We thank the reviewer for reading our manuscript carefully and for his positive feedback. Indeed, this limitation is linked with the context of our study and is clearly discussed into the third paragraph of the “Strengths and limitations” section (page 9-10).

ADDITIONAL REQUESTS/SUGGESTIONS:
I don't think so. Again, generalizability is the big issue here. The authors have addressed it, so there's nothing else they can do short of a new study.