Author’s response to reviews

Title: Epidemiology of gastrointestinal symptoms in young and middle-aged Swiss adults: prevalences and comorbidities in a longitudinal population cohort over 28 years

Authors:

Maria Avramidou (avramidmar@gmail.com)
Felix Angst (f.angst@rehaclinic.ch)
Jules Angst (jules.angst@uzh.ch)
André Aeschlimann (a.aeschlimann@rehaclinic.ch)
Wulf Rössler (wulf.roessler@uzh.ch)
Ulrich Schnyder (ulrich.schnyder@bluewin.ch)

Version: 2 Date: 09 Jan 2018

Author’s response to reviews:

BMGE D 17 00505R1 – Comments revision 2- Point by point response

Reviewer reports:

Steven R Blanke (Reviewer 1): This manuscript entitled "Epidemiology of gastrointestinal symptoms in young and middle-aged Swiss adults: prevalences and comorbidities in a longitudinal population cohort over 28 years" evaluates the prevalence of subacute and chronic gastrointestinal symptoms and their associations with somatic and mental disorders in the general population.

Strengths of the manuscript include the importance of the overall area of study, the large, longitudinal nature of the study, and, the design of the study to eliminate age differences as a variable.

The data are largely consistent with other publications. The weaknesses and caveats of the study are largely acknowledged by the authors. The data are difficult to interpret in terms of causality, and thus it is difficult to assess the extent to which this manuscript advances the field.
Comment: Thank you for your positive and encouraging statements.

The cover letter implies that the current manuscript is a resubmission, but there is no indication about the disposition of the original reviews, as well as the changes that have been made in response to the original critiques.

Comment: The first submission was revised to fulfil the Journal’s style and other requirements. In particular, some (sub)headings were changed or adapted and the list of abbreviations was added.

Mohammad Bashashati (Reviewer 2): This is an interesting article; the findings are expected, if nobody has published similar data on this database, this would be suitable for publication.

Comment: Thank you for your positive statements.

1) What questionnaire did you use for GI symptoms? Was it valid? Have you ever published GI data from this cohort? Why Stomach and intestine symptoms and not upper/lower GI symptoms.

Comment: GI Symptoms were assessed by the Structured Psychopathological Interview and Rating of the Social Consequences of Psychological Disturbances for Epidemiology (SPIKE), as described in the first and second paragraphs of the instruments and measures section (Methods).

The usefulness and validity of the SPIKE have been described in numerous publications (for example ref. 11 of the paper, but also all subsequent reports published on this huge Zurich study).

In some of those publications, GI data were included but this is the first paper to analyse in detail the GI data of the Zurich Cohort Study specifically from the somatic perspective.

We have extended the description of the assessment referring also to its validity in fourth paragraph of instruments and measures of material and methods.

We decided to keep the description of the symptoms as they were asked in the SPIKE interview, i.e., “stomach” for upper GI symptoms and “intestine” for lower GI symptoms. This nomenclature is better understood by the interviewees than lower and upper GI symptoms. This description was revised in the fourth paragraph of instruments and measures of material and methods.
2) Whenever you report OR (you should include CI).

Comment: To all odds ratios, the corresponding 99% confidence intervals have now been added.

3) The abstract has values and abbreviations which need definition or CI or SEM/SD.

Comment: In the abstract, all abbreviations were outlined. The confidence interval of the odds ratios were added, see comment to item 2).

4) The manuscript needs technical revision, e.g. instead of saying "subacute>=1 week", you should say "1 week <=subacute<=1 month. How did you come with idea of More than 1 week as subacute; i.e. in diarrhea >2 weeks and <1 month is subacute

Comment: The description of the symptom duration has been completely revised in the fifth paragraph of the instruments and measures section (Methods). The idea of excluding symptoms lasting <1 week= 7 days was to exclude infectious GI diseases.

5) "In order to increase the probability of the development of psychiatric syndromes, from this screening sample of 4547 persons a stratified subsample of 591 subjects (292 men, 299 women) was selected for interview?" Development or detection? How did you select the sample size; any missing data? why? The methodology section is not clear.

Comment: The description of the sample selection has been completely revised and outlined in greater detail in the first, second and third paragraphs of the setting and data sampling section (Methods).

6) English needs revision.

Comment: The revised paper has been completely edited by Ms. Elizabeth Kyrke, who is a native English professional translator.