Author's response to reviews

Title: Discordance between physician-rated health and an objective health measure among institutionalized older people

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Author's response to reviews: see over
The Editor,
BMC Geriatrics

Dear Sir:

Please find enclosed the manuscript entitled, "Discordance between physician-rated health and an objective health measure among institutionalized older people".

To our knowledge, this study is the first to compare physician-rated health with an objective health measure and, specifically, to provide evidence of one aspect of discordance, namely, the overrating of health. We believe that this work has great potential. Physician-rated health is a variable which is scarcely used at present, yet we nevertheless believe that it will be increasingly used. Though simple and easy to obtain, its performance has not been tested against objective standards. On doing precisely this, our study detected a remarkable fraction of a negative aspect of discordance, i.e., the overestimation of older patients' overall health by their physicians: many residents, with unquestioned poor health, received a good or very good rating. This may have consequences but that is something that remains to be seen.

We believe that these findings open up a line of research with promising developments because, as has been seen in the case of self-rated health, physician-rated health has many properties which could prove very useful in research. In addition, we present a measure of objective health easy to obtain and with good attributes. We also provide mortality data that may serve as a measure of criterion validity for all these variables.

The content has not been published or submitted for publication elsewhere.

The research project has been approved by the Carlos III Institute of Health Ethics Committee and conforms to the provisions of the Declaration of Helsinki (as revised in Tokyo 2004). All subjects (or next of kin) gave informed consent and patient anonymity has been assured through anonymization of the data set.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

Javier Damián, MD, MPH, PhD, on behalf of the authors