**Author’s response to reviews**

**Title:** Frail-VIG index: a concise frailty evaluation tool for rapid geriatric assessment. Results of a 24-months prospective follow-up

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20 December, 2017


LETTER OF RESPONSE TO THE EDITOR

Dear Prof. Hoogendijk:

Thank you for your recent email. You have raised some important issues which we hope to clarify in the present letter. We certainly understand your concerns, but as we explain in this letter, we believe that any worries about duplicate publication are unwarranted. Nevertheless, we sincerely regret any confusion caused.
1. It is important to emphasize that the article published in the Spanish journal Revista Española de Geriatría y Gerontología (REGG) was not only referenced in the current manuscript, but we clearly stated that "The design of the Frail-VIG index has been previously described." As that sentence and the citation make clear, we did not seek in any way to conceal this previous publication. However, after reading your letter, it appears that we should have been more explicit in explaining that this was a follow up study (although with major differences in focus, as we explain below).

2. This is the first time that the Frail-VIG index has been published in English. Our initial intention was to communicate the results at 24 months as a "short research paper". However, in the end, we opted to summarize the methodology used in its design and development because otherwise English-speaking readers (the other paper was published only in Spanish) would not have had access to the background information about the factors that went into its development, information that is essential to fully understand the instrument itself.

It is also important to keep in mind that, in the revised version of the manuscript, we ended up incorporating some information that had been previously described in the article published in the REGG, but only because, during the review process, the reviewers and editors had specifically requested that we add this information (there were nearly 50 queries from the reviewers and editors, most of which sought more details about how the instrument was developed and the characteristics of the cohort).

3. The only results repeated from the REGG article are the descriptive results of the patients' baseline status, which are (obviously) the same. However, this was necessary in order to compare the baseline data to the 24 month results. Any other "repeated" data are due to specific requests by the editor and/or reviewers during the review process, such as, for example, the new tables and figures, which we added based on the reviewers' recommendations.

4. We strongly believe that we did not violate the policies of the BMC and certainly we had no intention of doing so (as evidenced by the fact that we explicitly cited our previous publication in the Method section). The 24 month results have never been reported anywhere. Moreover, we
report the 12 month results only to contrast these with the 24 month results, which show that the AUC is highest at month 12, after which it begins to decrease. These results provide information that is, in our view, substantial and necessary to understand the characteristics of the instrument (as we describe in the Discussion).

5. Compare to the first publication, there is a substantial change in focus regarding the use of the Frail-VIG index: in the Spanish-language article, the Frail-VIG was proposed as a type of FI-CGA, whereas the present manuscript presents the Frail-VIG as a Rapid Geriatric Assessment (RGA) tool, as clearly indicated in the manuscript.

6. The similarities between the conclusions of the two manuscripts are simply due to the need to emphasize the key aspects of the instrument (in this case published for the first time in English). Any overlap between the content in the current manuscript and the previous publication in REGG is only because it was necessary to provide essential background information to English-speaking readers about how the instrument was developed. In fact, any "overlap" is primarily because the revised manuscript incorporated additional data to satisfy the multiple queries made by the reviewers. That said, we believe that adding these data has greatly improved the manuscript because it provides the necessary background information.

To conclude, we would like to make the following statements:

1) We wish to reiterate that we had no intention to publish two papers based on the same data. We hope that our explanation in this letter has made it clear that, in fact, with the exception of the baseline data, the reported data are not the same. Moreover, we emphasize that the results at 24 months have never been previously reported.

2) We sincerely regret any confusion. If you believe it is appropriate and necessary, we will modify the manuscript as you see fit. If you believe we should be more explicit and descriptive about the relationship between the two papers, we will make those modifications. If you believe
that it is sufficient to write "The design of the Frail-VIG index has been previously described" in the Methods section, providing the reference to the REGG (as we have done), we believe that much of the description of that instrument (from page 6, line 147 to page 10, line 233) could be removed.

Again, we apologize for any confusion and we hope that the present letter has clarified our intent.

We look forward to your answer and we would be happy to provide any additional information if needed.

Sincerely,

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LETTER OF RESPONSE TO THE REVIEWERS

The authors' response letter has been included as a supplementary file