Author’s response to reviews

Title: ADVANCE CARE PLANNING DISPOSITIONS: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTION

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Editor, dear reviewers:

Thank you very much for your thoughtful comments on our first submission. We have revised the manuscript accordingly and done a thorough proofreading. You will find below a point-by-point response to each comment.

We hope you will find that the corrections resolve the issues raised. Of course, we remain open to further suggestions for improving the quality of the manuscript.

To the Editor: please note that some of the authors’ affiliations have changed since the manuscript’s first submission. The Institute of social and preventive medicine has been integrated into a new entity: the Center for Primary Care and Public Health (Unisanté), University of Lausanne, Switzerland.
Best regards,

On behalf of all the authors,

Anne Cattagni Kleiner

Editor Comments:

1) In accordance with our Submission Guidelines (https://bmcgeriatr.biomedcentral.com/submission-guidelines/preparing-your-manuscript#preparing+tables), please do not include colour or shading in Tables.

Response: we have made the change

2) In table 1, please replace "ans" with "years".

Response: We have changed “ans” for“years”.

BMC Geriatrics operates a policy of open peer review, which means that you will be able to see the names of the reviewers who provided the reports via the online peer review system. We encourage you to also view the reports there, via the action links on the left-hand side of the page, to see the names of the reviewers.

Reviewer reports:

Elizabeth Weathers (Reviewer 1): Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript.

Overall, the study is an important one and gives due consideration to perceptions of other legal dispositions aside from Advance Directives (i.e. healthcare proxy and lasting power of attorney). However, I would recommend that the background and context require some improvements to ensure the significance of the topic is clear to the reader. Clarification of terms throughout the
manuscript is warranted to make them easily recognizable to a global audience. For example, it is not clear until halfway through the background that the term 'disposition' is referring to legal dispositions for ACP. Perhaps inclusion of the word legal from the beginning would be helpful in this case. The term 'tools' is also used intermittently to refer to the legal dispositions. This is confusing for the reader. Also, in the abstract, the authors use the abbreviation Lc65+ without explaining what is meant or referring to the original study. I have provided some grammatical suggestions in my comments; however, the manuscript would benefit from a thorough proof-read to improve sentence structure and grammar. The content is novel and of importance, but this is not clearly demonstrated to the reader due to structural and terminology issues. My suggested changes below should improve the flow of writing and help to ensure the reader grasps the importance of the content immediately.

Response:

- The background section was revised – please see our response to the next comment below.
- "We have replaced “dispositions” with “legal dispositions for ACP” or “ACP dispositions” wherever it made the sentences clearer. We have also taken out the word “tool” to only have “disposition”.
- In the abstract we have added after Lc65+:“, a population-based longitudinal study on aging and frailty.” (p2, line 15). And later: “Covariables were extracted from the Lc65+ database” (p2, line 19).
- The document went through a thorough proofreading by a native English speaker who is also a social scientist. Consequently, we have made small corrections throughout the document.

Background:

Some sentences were not clear, especially to a reader who is not familiar with the Swiss legalities on advance care planning. I think this section needs further development to be very clear on terms and definitions of terms from the beginning. May I also make the following specific suggested changes to the authors:

*Page 3, Lines 36-43: the sentence beginning with 'Because' and ending with 'population' is too long and should be divided into two sentences as it relates to two separate statements. Also, I would encourage the authors to avoid beginning a sentence with 'Because'.

Response :
- We have added descriptive information on each of the three legal dispositions in the Background section (p 3, lines 9-19.) as well as the following sentence: “None of the LPOA, the AD or the designation of an HCP is mandatory.” (p3, line 25).

- We have changed some terms to be more consistent on how we refer to dispositions (see response to prior comment).

- We have revised the sentence formerly beginning with “Because” and ending with “population” as suggested and added some contextual information on why local studies have focused on AD (p3, lines 35-41).

*Page 4, Line 12: should it be 'outside of the end-of-life population’?
Response: yes, change made (p4, line 19)

*Page 4, Line 12: Change 'these dispositions' as it is not clear what dispositions the authors are referring to.
Response: We have changed “these dispositions” to “legal dispositions for ACP” (p4, line 19).

*Page 4, Line 17: change the word 'divergence' to association or correlation.
Response: We agree that the use of the word “divergence” makes the sentence unclear. We are however proposing “conjunction of” instead of “correlation or association” since it is by definition not based on the same individuals (p4, line 23).

*Page 4, Line 29: what is meant by 'such dispositions’? Be more specific.
Response: We have changed “such dispositions” with ”legal dispositions for ACP” (p4 , line 33).

*Page 4, Line 26/27: the sentence beginning with 'However' states that no studies have examined the relationship between perceptions of advance care planning legal dispositions and knowledge. Yet, the next sentence seems to imply that there has already been a study conducted to measure knowledge, use and perceptions. Is the study described in the manuscript based on further analysis of data collected in this other cited study? Please clarify.
Response: We have clarified this by changing “A survey conducted” with “The survey we conducted” and moved this sentence to start the following paragraph (p4, line 35).

*Page 4, Line 36/37: the sentence beginning with 'The current work…’ should be moved to link with the next paragraph on the theoretical model.
Response: That is correct, we’ve made the change (p4, line 41).

Methods:

Data source and participants section:

Please confirm if the survey was sent at the same time as the Lausanne cohort follow-up annual questionnaires?

Response: No, and we have now specified this on p 5, lines 9-13: “A month after the regular annual questionnaire was received, ….”

Data collection:

Please give further information on the validity and reliability of the survey instrument used - what efforts were made to ensure the face and content validity (as a minimum)?

Response: We have amended the sentence on how the questionnaire was developed by adding “addressing end-of-life issues in their different fields of expertise” and added the following sentence: “Content validity was assessed within the same team and the questionnaire was not submitted to outside experts.”(p6, lines 19-23)

The sections describing the questions on knowledge and perceptions of dispositions could be integrated into the data collection section without subheadings. These paragraphs would be better placed right after the 1st paragraph in the data collection section followed by the 'Covariates' section (which should be re-labelled as 'Demographics’), and then finishing with the paragraph about the response rate.
Responses:

- As suggested we have integrated the dispositions and perceptions paragraphs without subheadings into the data collection section before the paragraph about the response rate (p6, lines 27-43).

- Covariables in our studies do not solely consist of demographic variables. We also used social, health and other characteristics. We therefore do not think that entitling this section “Demographics” is appropriate for our manuscript. However, we did change “Covariates” to “Covariables” throughout for consistency. (p7, line 13)

I would recommend the following specific terminology changes:

*Page 5, Line 55: use the word 'integrated' instead of nested
Response: ok, change made (p6, line 7)

*Page 6, Line 12: use the word 'developed' instead of 'built'
Response: We have made the change (p6, line 17).

Results:

Description of the sample:

Page 9, Line 36/37: Change to 'About three out of ten persons reported no chronic disease (of the options provided) and one half had been hospitalized in the five years prior to the survey. Half of the sample were worried about their health and the vast majority had experience at least one stressful event in the past five years'.

Response: These changes were made as suggested (they indeed make the sentence easier to read), (p9, line 47-p10, line 1-5), except for “Half of the sample were worried” which we changed for “Half of the sample reported that they worried”.
Discussion:

The subheadings do not seem to be appropriate. I would encourage the authors to better integrate the content of the discussion on page 11 and 12.

Response: We have taken out the subheadings, moved the second sentence of the first paragraph (p12, lines 13-17), and moved the limitations section after the Practice implications one (p15, lines 1-15) to give the text a better flow.

Limitations:

Please add a comment on the questionnaire and limitations in that regard.

Response: We have added the following sentences (p15, lines 9-15): “Finally, the questionnaire was developed and evaluated for its validity by an interdisciplinary team of professionals dealing with end-of-life issues in their different fields of expertise. However, it was not submitted to an outside expert panel for review and did not go through a face validity test with the population of interest.”

I would encourage the authors to revise and submit. There are many changes required; however, most are easily addressed by a thorough proof-read for flow, sentence structure, sequencing, etc. As a result, the importance of the study results and implications is not clear enough to the reader and the content is undermined. I wish you the best of luck with the revisions and look forward to seeing a revised version.

Thank you again for your careful review.

Reviewer 2 (Reviewer 2): PEER REVIEWER ASSESSMENTS:

OBJECTIVE - Full research articles: is there a clear objective that addresses a testable research question(s) (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 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 - Is the current version of this work technically sound? If not, can revisions be made to make the work technically sound?

Yes - current version is technically sound

PEER REVIEWER COMMENTS:

GENERAL COMMENTS: A well conducted and reported study. The paper is very informative and accessible. The authors surveyed a large sample size of 2125 older adults with an 80% response rate. The study was well-designed within a longitudinal cohort. The questionnaire used measured the appropriate outcomes and the regressions were correct for use in this context.

There is only a couple of grammatical issues in the background section: P3, line 45/46 Would read better... less than a third formally communicated....
ADDITIONAL REQUESTS/SUGGESTIONS:

I would only advise on the minor grammatical issue on page 3.

Response: We have made the change (p3, lines 45-47).

Thank you for your review.