Author’s response to reviews

Title: Use of cervicovaginal PAMG-1 protein as a predictor of delivery within seven days in pregnancies at risk of premature birth

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Answers to Editor Comments:

Dear Editor,

Thank you for your supporting behavior. We corrected the mistakes according to your offers. We hope it is now acceptable for publication in your valuable journal.

Best regards,

Yasemin Çekmez.

1. In the title you state ‘…..as a predictor of delivery…..’, but use ‘as a predictor of labour’ in the abstract; there is a difference. Please be consistent in your meaning and use the same language throughout.

We corrected that difference.
2. In your response to the reviewers, you indicated that your manuscript was English proof read. It is apparent that this proofing was not sufficient as there remains a number of typographical and syntax errors throughout that need correcting before your manuscript can be published. I have detailed some of these from the abstract and page 1 of the manuscript, but then stopped at this point as there were just too many. I suggest you need to source someone who can fully proof your paper for appropriate use of English language, grammar and syntax. Here are some examples, but there are many more in the paper;

a. The abstract contains multiple formatting issues; for example, inappropriate spacing between % figures and commas, extra spacing between words, or no spacing when there should be one

b. ‘A total of 72 pregnant women included for the study’ needs to be changed to ‘A total of 72 pregnant women were included in the study’

c. 73.3 (line 18 of abstract) needs % after it to be consistent with how the other figures are presented

d. Lines 41-43 (Background); ‘….application of interventions as antenatal corticosteroid therapy…’ needs to be changed to ‘….application of interventions such as antenatal corticosteroid therapy….’

e. In the main text, the abbreviations fFN and CLM need to be written in full the first time used and then can be abbreviated thereafter; you have done this in the abstract, but it needs to be done in the main manuscript too

f. Second last line of Background; membrane rupture – should be membrane rupture

g. Study population; ‘The population was consist of pregnant women with singleton….’ needs to be changed to ‘The population consisted of pregnant women with singleton….’
We sent the paper to the American Journal Experts and they checked out our paper for appropriate use of English language, grammar and syntax.

3. For reviewer 1’s comment ‘please give the correct pregnancy interval for inclusion (with days); my understanding of this means pregnancy gestation in weeks + days (i.e. 168 days = 24+0 weeks and 238 days = 34+0 weeks). If you are using a definition of preterm birth of birth less than 37 completed weeks of pregnancy, why did you use 238 days as a cut-off criterion? Why not include women up to 36+6 weeks? Your choice needs to be justified in your manuscript, or maybe this is an error as the SD in Table 1 of 2.8 suggests a higher gestation that 34+0 weeks?

We saw that we had made a mistake while writing the SD in table 1. It should be 1.8 and we corrected that mistake. You are right, the definition of preterm birth is less than 37 completed weeks of pregnancy. But in our trial we compared the PAMG-1 with fFN. And fibronectin can be used between 22+0 weeks and 34+0 weeks. So we only chose the patients who were between 24+0 and 34+0. The reason that we did not include babies between 22+0 and 24+0 is that these parts of pregnancy are not accepted as viable. So we included the pregnancies between 24+0 and 34+0 weeks of gestation.

4. I think external electrocardiotochocrophy should just be external cardiotocography

We corrected the word.

5. For reviewer 1’s comment; in case of inclusion it is not clear for me, if all criterions or only at least one had to be present. While your response states that all should be present you have not made this clear in your manuscript; To make this clear, I suggest you need to change the following sentence ‘Women with clinically evaluated symptoms of preterm labor: at least 4 contractions in 60 minutes based on the external electrocardiotochocrophy, cervical dilation > 1 cm - 50%, cervical length of < 30mm on transvaginal ultrasound were included for the study
after taking ethical approval….’ TO ‘Women with all of the following clinically evaluated symptoms of preterm labour were eligible for inclusion in the study; at least 4 contractions in 60 minutes based on external cardiotocography, cervical dilation > 1cm - < 3cm, effacement of >50%, and cervical length of < 30mm on transvaginal ultrasound. The study was approved by the Ethical Committe of Umramiy Medical and Research Hospital.’

We corrected the criterion as you offered.

6. Please write the abbreviations of SN, SP, NPV, PPV out in full for the first time you use them in the main text.

We wrote the abbreviations.

7. In the Results section; ‘….after 8 were excluded due to inconsistent data (10%),’ – What does this mean? i.e. what were the inconsistent data, or what are you referring to here?

We added the reasons why we excluded the 8 patient.

8. Write OR and CI out in full for the first time you use them

We wrote OR and CI out in full.

9. (%20.8) – the correct format for this, and all others, is 20.8%

We corrected that mistake.
10. In the Discussion you state; In this trial….but this study is not a ‘trial’ rather it is an observational study on diagnostic test accuracy, please correct

We corrected our mistake.

11. Table 2: please insert the numbers of test-positives in the heading row; i.e. PAMG-1 positive women, N=15; and so forth for the others.

We added the numbers of test-positives

12. Regarding reviewer 2’s comment on your sample size, stating that is the sample size is small and thus a limitation in your Discussion is not a sufficient response for this comment. What is expected is some details in the Methods section on how you arrived at 72 women; i.e. how did you recruit the sample - were these women who presented consecutively to the hospital over a particular period of time? Was your study time-bound, and is this why you stopped at 72 women. Please provide the appropriate information your methods section

This was a time-bound study. We added information about this.

13. Regarding reviewer 2’s comments re STARD; I feel your response is insufficient. There is absolutely an expectation that studies of particular types should be reported according to the recognised developed guideline; this is crucial to enhance reporting rigor; for example, a randomised trial would not be published if it did not adhere to CONSORT nor would a systematic review if it did not conform to PRISMA. Similarly, you should make attempts to report your study as per STARD criteria. Perhaps not all of the elements will apply, and that is okay, but I do not understand when you say your study is ‘contradictory’. You omit a considerable amount of information that could be added to your paper to better conform with STARD reporting; for example, provide the dates of the study, include a flow diagram of participants (i.e. approached, consented, excluded after testing, etc.), state if the sample was consecutively recruited, or otherwise, provide cut-off values for positive tests, etc., etc. Please
review your paper and add in this extra information to better conform with STARD in as far as is reasonable and available.

We checked out our paper and added extra information and a flow chart of methods to better conform with STARD.