Author’s response to reviews

Title: Reproductive Cancer Risk Factors among Relatives of Cancer Patients in a Tertiary Oncology Center

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Author’s response to reviews:

Response to the comment given by the reviewers

Reviewer reports:
Jeovany Martínez-Mesa, MD PhD (Reviewer 1):

Methods

The authors need to explain in the methods section about the sample size calculation and the power of the study.

Reply: There was no sample size calculation for this study, we used all available data in Preventive Oncology Department data set. In Methods section, page 2, lines 27-28 following amendments have been made:

“To collect data convenience sampling method was used. Data of 595 women was included in this study.”

What were the inclusion and exclusion criteria used for the study participants recruitment?

Reply: In Methods section, page 2, lines 25-27 following amendments have been made:
“All female relatives of the cancer patients coming to the Hacettepe University Oncology Hospital in order to be diagnosed and treated were included in this study. Those who were not agreed to answer the questionnaire were excluded from the study.”

Also, all the variables analyzed in the study need to be defined and explained in the methods section.

Reply: Vast majority of the variable in this study are well known such as such as age, marital status, income, pregnancy, delivery…… In addition, defining all the variables will increase the word count of the manuscript.

We made following amendments in the Method section, page 3, lines 3-5: “In this study, we primarily measured frequencies of specific known risk factors for gynecologic cancers. we looked for demographics, medical and drug history, and reproductive history of the participants. In addition, we asked about their awareness and behavior toward mammography, Pap test and protective condom use.”

Description of some of the variables are added in the footnotes of the tables that can be viewed in Tables section, page 10, line 3 “Menarche: the first menstruation”, and page 12, lines 3 &4 “Pap test: a test to take a sample of cells from the uterine cervix; Mammography: the breasts tissue X-ray for screening of breast cancer”

Discussion

I suggest that the authors include in the discussion section at least one paragraph discussing the limitations of the study and how they could have affected the study results.

The following points could be discussed:

1. The study was performed with a non-random sampling. How were the results affected by the use of this sampling criterion?

Reply: paragraph added in the Discussion section, page 5, lines 24-26: “This study had a nonrandom sampling design and was done on a population with a specific condition, the results may have variations from what is valid for the general population. Though very few, illiterate women were not able to answer the questionnaire. This means result from this study cannot be generalize to the population. However, findings from this study will be valid for similar population groups, such as; relatives of cancer patients.”

2. The instrument used is not validated. Any evidence that this may affect the results?
Reply: As the variables included in this study were chosen after a rigorous literature review and the tool was first piloted and was checked for content validity we assume the result would not be affected.

3. The questionnaire was self-applied. Illiterate patients did not participate in the study? Was any strategy developed for these patients?

Reply: Illiteracy level in turkey is very low (4.5%), we assume the result would not be affected significantly.

Table 1

Please, improve the table's title.

The column named "Means(SD)" is not necessary. I suggest to exclude it.

Reply: the amendments have been done in table 1, page 10, line 2.

Table 2

Please, improve the table's title.

To difficult to understand the information that are shown in table 2.

Reply: Amendments have been done in table 2. It is simplified and divided in to two separate tables that can be viewed in pages 11&12, lines 1 and table 2 &3.

Table 3

The title is not right. In table 3 authors are actually showing the prevalence variation of different variable according to BMC groups.

Reply: The amendments have been done in table 1, page 13, lines 1.

Reviewer 2 (Reviewer 3): 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?

No - there are minor issues

EXECUTION - Are the experiments and analyses performed with technical rigor to allow confidence in the results?

No - there are minor issues

Statistics - Is the use of statistics in the manuscript appropriate?

No - there are issues with the statistics in the study

INTERPRETATION - Is the current interpretation/discussion of the results reasonable and not overstated?

No - there are minor issues

OVERALL MANUSCRIPT POTENTIAL - Is the current version of this work technically sound? If not, can revisions be made to make the work technically sound?

Probably - with minor revisions

PEER REVIEWER COMMENTS:

GENERAL COMMENTS: The authors have conducted a cross-sectional study to assess the prevalence of gynecological cancer risk factors and awareness of screening tools in female relatives of cancer patients. A self-administered questionnaire was used for this purpose.

The manuscript could be improved for clarity in data presentation, methods, language and grammar.

Reply: Amendments have been made in the Methods section that can be viewed in page 2, lines 25-28: “All female relatives of the cancer patients coming to the Hacettepe University Oncology Hospital in order to be diagnosed and treated were included in this study. Those who were not
agreed to answer the questionnaire were excluded from the study. To collect data convenience sampling method was used. Data of 595 women was included in this study.”

And page 3, lines 1-5: “To secure anonymity of the participants no name and identity related information were used in this study. In this study, we primarily measured frequencies of specific known risk factors for gynecologic cancers. We looked for demographics, medical and drug history, and reproductive history of the participants. In addition, we asked about their awareness and behavior toward mammography, Pap test and protective condom use.”

It is difficult to tell where all the statistical methods mentioned in the methods section were used (Tukey test, T-test, ANOVA, Mann-Whitney U test, Kruskall-Wallis test, Chi-Square test, Fisher test, Bonferroni correction). I would suggest the authors to mention clearly in the footnotes of the tables where these tests were conducted.

Subgroup analysis has been mentioned in the methods section but no description of the subgroups has been provided in the methods section.

Reply: This manuscript was taken from a thesis work. All statistical methods used in the thesis was mistakenly copied in this manuscript. For this manuscript all above mentioned tests are not conducted. As a result, they were removed.

The revisions can be viewed in the methods section, page 3, lines 7-9: “Quantitative data was presented using mean (SD) and median (IQR). Categorical data was presented with percentages. Chi-squared test was used to determine prevalence variation of different variables according to BMI groups.”

No mention of missing data in the methods section of the limitations in the Discussion.

Recall bias has not been mentioned in limitations of this study.

Reply: amendment has been made that can be viewed in Discussion section, page 6, line 28 and page 6, lines 1-2: “Information about some of the variables were not provided by all the participants which was considered while analysis and presenting the results. Another limitation of this study was recalling some dates such as menarche age, age at sexual activity and delivery that should be considered while using results of this study.”

There is no mention of how patient anonymity was maintained in the Methods section.

In Table 2.

Reply: amendment has been made that can be viewed in Methods section, page 3, lines 1-2: “To secure anonymity of the participants no name and identity related information were used in this study.”

REQUESTED REVISIONS:
Study methodology section, study limitations section, data presentation, and overall clarity (sentence formation, language, and grammar) can be improved based on above suggestions.

Reply: Amendment are done accordingly.

ADDITIONAL REQUESTS/SUGGESTIONS:

None.

Note: This reviewer report can be downloaded - see attached pdf file.