Author’s response to reviews

Title: Development and implementation of the first national data quality standards for population-based birth defects surveillance programs in the United States

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Version: 2 Date: 20 June 2015

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June 20, 2015

The Editor, Biomed Central (BMC) Public Health

Dear Editor,

Thank you for the reviewer comments on our manuscript, National data quality standards for population-based birth defects surveillance programs in the United States (MS 4715416081581862). We have incorporated the suggestions in the manuscript and below is a point-by-point response to each comment.

TITLE

Comment 1: “Please provide the full postal address of the submitting author in the title page.”

Response: The full postal address of the submitting author is now in the title page.

Comment 2: “Authors may consider reviewing the title to reflect what was done.”

Response: We added the following words to the title: “Development and implementation of the first”.

Comment 3: “Author should amend the title to show that the publication is an preliminary report on the subject Methodology.”

Response: See response to Comment #2 above.

METHODS

Comment 4: “Authors stated that the NBDPN Standards Workgroup queried existing birth defects surveillance programs. As written, this is rather ambiguous. Authors need to expatiate on this or otherwise express the activity differently.”

Response: We expanded the sentence to include, “by contacting program managers on the NBDPN state birth defects contact list.”

Comment 5: “Authors need to explain criteria employed to designate a population-based birth defects surveillance programme as eligible in the Methods section.”
Response: We added the following sentence to the Methods section: “Eligible programs had to conduct population-based birth defect surveillance using active or passive case finding.”

Comment 6: “It is also important to explain the ‘minimum inclusion criteria’ mentioned in the Results section, in the Methods section.”

Response: We moved the exclusion criteria to the Methods section, which now includes the following text: “To be included in the analyses a program must have met level 1 for data quality measure 1.1 [types of data sources used to identify potential cases] and have achieved an overall average score on all measures of at least 1.”

Comment 7: “A sentence describing the study design will be appropriate.”

Response: We added the following sentence at the beginning of the Methods section: “This was a descriptive study of the development and initial testing of a data quality assessment tool for population-based birth defect surveillance programs.”

Comment 8: “Criteria for inclusion for analysis should be described under methodology.”

Response: See response to Comment #6 above.

DISCUSSION

Comment 9: “Page 9, Line 2: ‘to focus on certain attributes in order’ Confirm if the sentence is intended to imply the meaning in the statement below- ‘that makes it inevitable to focus on a particular attribute against others’, given resource constraints.”

Response: To clarify the meaning, we have edited the text to read “to focus on certain attributes instead of others given resource constraints”.

Comment 10: “Paragraphs 2, 3, 4 and 5, all on cancer registry is obviously too long and has many areas that do not relate to the discussion on birth defect registry. Authors should review and reduce the paragraphs and bring out portions that contribute to the study findings.”

Response: We have revised this section to shorten it and to more clearly focus on standards development in cancer registries, vital statistics registries and EUROCAT (the European birth defect registry network) and to show the value of those standards in terms of data use and products.

Comment 11: “Page 12, Line 7: ‘to transition to standards to increase’. The meaning is not clear. Please address”

Response: We edited the text to read: “to transition from guidelines to national standards to increase”.

Comment 12: “Page 13, Paragraph 2 is not contributing to the discussion significantly. Please delete or amend to bring out the import of its inclusion in the discussion.”

Response: We have added a key sentence from this paragraph into the preceding paragraph and have deleted the rest of the paragraph.

Sincerely,

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