Reviewer's report

Title: A telephone survey of factors affecting willingness to participate in health research surveys

Version: 1  Date: 30 March 2015

Reviewer: Kristen Malecki

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Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?

The background and introduction while concise and frames the big-picture well, it does not describe how they sought to answer their research questions and what resources will be used to do so, therefore once they jump into describing the different cohorts, general public and case-control samples, there is no context by which to go by. The findings of this study are very consistent with previous studies regarding survey participation and methods.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?

My major concern with this study is the study design. Methods are overall well-described; however, the very nature of the study design is biased by the problem they are trying to study/address- they still are only surveying individuals who have agreed to participate in the survey about participation in survey research. It is a bit circular, but I am not sure that this the best method/approach for addressing their research aims. How is non-response bias adjusted for in their sample and how might this affect the study results? Also, gender is a known modifier affecting research participation and yet the authors chose a cohort of 90% men to study willingness to participate in a cohort study. This is evident in their own differences in female participation rates compared to total Australian population., and this was even more evident in the study results when asking those surveyed regarding participation in health surveys. “For the general population sample, greater willingness to participate was reported by women 160 than men (61% vs 58% p = 0.047), “

Results do not discuss these data limitations at all in the discussion.

3. Are the data sound?

Despite concerns regarding bias in interpretation and the results, the data seem fine.

4. Do the figures appear to be genuine, i.e. without evidence of manipulation?
There should be some confidence interval or p-value showing significant differences in table 2. Table 4 should include references to chi-square tests corresponding to p-values, similar to Table 3. Figure 1 – gen should be spelled out.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

The discussions and conclusions do not discuss the issues of inherent bias and potential for reporting bias in their own work as a limitation to the overall study.

6. The limitations of the work are not clearly stated, please see above.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.