Author’s response to reviews

Title: A Decade of Road Traffic Fatalities among the Elderly in North-West Iran

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Author’s response to reviews:

The authors' response letter has been included as a supplementary file

Dear editor,

Thanks for asking us to revise our manuscript. We revised the manuscript according to the comments of the reviewers and had it edited for language by a professional native speaker (Watson language company in Sweden - http://watsonlanguage.se). I hope the manuscript is now improved enough to be published in BMC Public Health. Following are the point-by-point responses to the comments of the reviewers.

Best regards,

Corresponding author

Reviewer comments and author responses:

Reviewer 1:

I thank the authors for addressing the reviewers' comments and questions. While I believe the authors have addressed many of my points on the surface, they have not succeeded in editing the paper so that the English is clear and readable. I do not believe the authors will be able to make this paper adequately readable for publication on further revision.
Thanks for the comments. We sent the final revised manuscript to a professional language editing company and the manuscript is now edited by Garry Watson from Watson language in Sweden.

Some of the additions to the paper need further clarification. For example, the following sentence was added to the introduction without context saying in which part of the world this finding holds: "It has been shown that younger adults have higher risk of being involved in non-fatal crashes, the elderly have the highest total death rates, largely because of pedestrian crashes." It is not the case in some higher-income countries that the elderly's high death rate is largely because of pedestrian crashes.

It belonged to Iranian context based on reference 5 of the manuscript. Clarified further in 2nd revision.

The same is true of the following sentence in the discussion, which is meaningless without a region attached to it: "Pedestrian victim injuries have also been to cause about 4/5 elderly traffic injuries." Where? The preceding paragraph mentions multiple regions of the world (Australia and Iran), but it looks like the citation is for a study conducted in China.

Clarified and the typing typo also corrected.

Abstract, results, 1st sentence: I said in my original review to not say that "about" 14.4% of fatalities were elderly because this figure was not an approximation, but a sentence can't start with a numeral. Please start the sentence with a word. This sentence repeats itself in the results, and there are other sections of the paper where sentences start with numerals as well.

Corrected. We had corrected all the sentences in prior revision according to the comments except for the sentence in abstract and repeated in text as commented above by the reviewer that is now corrected.

Some of the conclusions of the paper are still a stretch based on the data that are presented. For example, the authors did not address this point from my original review: The authors also argue that older traffic victims are more often pedestrians because older people are less willing and able to drive. While this seems logical, again, it would be helpful to cite statistics to back this up. Older people also drive less than the rest of the population in westernized countries like the United States, but are not as likely to be pedestrians when fatally injured as in Iran.
This was mostly just an explanation based on our experience not a fact referred to a published work. That is because we do not have a published accessible statistics on this. This was the reason that we started the sentence quite conservatively with “We believe this may …”.

Moreover, according to the 2015 statistics (https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policyinformation/statistics/2015/dl20.cfm), 18.4% of Americans with a driving license are aged >=65 which is much higher than what we know based on unpublished police statistics in Iran. However, there may be other explanations either. In revised manuscript we improved discussion on this with more explanations to be considered.

Reviewer 2:

The revised version of the paper - 'A decade of Road Traffic Fatalities among the Elderly in North-West of Iran' - shows that a number of changes have been made to improve the manuscript. However, the language still needs to be edited, especially the parts that have been added, but also the whole manuscript.

Thanks for the comments. We sent the final revised manuscript to a professional language editing company and the manuscript is now edited by Garry Watson from Watson language in Sweden.

The term 'non-elderly group' that has been introduced in the revised version should be changed to the term used for this age group in other parts of the manuscript (both in the text and in Table 1).

Changed as requested.

The results of Table 2 are not presented in the text.

Added.

The limitation section needs to be improved e.g. how does the inconsistent registration by forensic physicians affect the results; the validity of the information used; the categorization of type of vehicle used.

Improved as recommended.