Author’s response to reviews

Title: Fatal cases associated with eating chapatti contaminated with organophosphate in Tororo District, Eastern Uganda, 2015: Case Series

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Version: 3 Date: 01 May 2019

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Response to editor’s and reviewers’ comments

Editor’s comment: Under the heading "Funding", please declare the role of the funding body in the design of the study and collection, analysis, and interpretation of data and in writing the manuscript.
Response: Page 11, Funding Section, Line 263: This has been added.

Reviewer 1

Comment 1: Page 4, Line 94-96: Discretionary revision: Please provide references to these studies.
Response 1: Page 4, line 94-96: Suggestion appreciated. We have added key references to these lines.

Comment 2: Page 8, Line 183-87 Discretionary revision: Be aware of several other studies published on 'accidental food poisonings by pesticides' that would be valuable to include in your article e.g. doi: 10.2478/10004-1254-63-2012-2158, doi: 10.1007/s00204-013-1113-6, DOI: 10.1179/107735203800328821
Response 2: Page 8, line 186-188: We thank the reviewer for pointing us to these references. We’ve added them to improve the paper.

Reviewer 2
Comment 1: Page 3, line 63: vomiting and diarrhoea should be specifically mentioned here as they are often the first symptoms. Please clarify occupation of case 7 (stated as salon owner in text, housewife in table 1).
Response 1: Page 3, line 57-59: We agree with the reviewer and have added these symptoms. Page3, line 127-128: We noted the confusion and have fixed it by referring to case 7 as a hair-salon worker. This is both in text and in table 1.

Comment 2: Table 1: I think it would be useful to list the symptoms experienced by each case rather than the number of symptoms (which doesn't tell you much about severity, i.e. symptoms could be mild like headache or severe like coma and still count as 1 here). I would suggest having age and sex in this table too.
Response 2: Table 1: We thank the reviewer for this suggestion and agree with it. We have added age, sex and symptoms for each case and this makes the table much more informative.

Comment 3: Figure 1: I'm not sure this figure is necessary. I think the symptom onset would be better described in Table 1 in a new column called "time from exposure to symptom onset" or similar.
Response 3: Figure 1: We appreciate this suggestion. We tried to do as suggested but the numbers do not bring out the point that this was a point-source outbreak, which was important to emphasise from the epidemiological perspective of this investigation. Therefore we have retained the epidemic curve.

Comment 4: Figure 3: vomiting is spelled incorrectly.
Response 4: Figure 3: This has been fixed

Comment 5: Figure 3: It would be good to state the cut offs for "low blood pressure"
Comment 5: Figure 3: We have added the standard cut-offs for low blood pressure (≤90/60mmhg)

Comment 6: Page 9, Line 217-219: Here I understand that plasma cholinesterase levels were unable to be obtained for the patients but is this possible for the patients who died?
Response 6: Page 9, line 217-219: We understand the reviewer’s concern. Unfortunately, due to existing circumstances at the time, samples to test for plasma cholinesterase levels were not collected from any of the patients. We have acknowledged this in the paper.

Comment 7: Page 8, Line 183-190: Could the authors give some context for the malaoxon levels found postmortem - i.e. have there been previously published fatalities and if so what where their levels?
Response 7: Page 8, line 183-190: Not much is documented about the toxicity of Malaoxon in humans and we have mentioned in the paper. We could only find 1 published human fatality with details on Malaoxon toxicity and we have added details on this to compare with our investigation and give some context.