Author’s response to reviews

Title: Exploring the burden of fatal drowning and data characteristics in three high income countries: Australia, Canada and New Zealand

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Helen Robertson, on behalf of Eva Szunyogova

BMC Public Health

Thank you to the editorial office and reviewers for their efforts in providing comment on PUBHD-18-04638 our manuscript entitled “Exploring the burden of fatal drowning and data characteristics in three high income countries: Australia, Canada and New Zealand”, which we submitted for potential publication in BMC Public Health.

We are pleased to see there is support for the study to be published after essential minor revisions. We have addressed each reviewer’s comment, point by point, in the table below and have also revised the manuscript accordingly using track changes.

We hope that the revisions are to the reviewers’ and editor’s satisfaction and the paper is now suitable for publication.

We can confirm that all authors have agreed to the submission to the journal and that the manuscript is not currently under submission in any other journal.

It would be an honour to be published in BMC Public Health.

Kind regards,

Amy Peden
REVIEWER COMMENT: Thank you for conducting an interesting study in the field of drowning prevention.

AUTHOR RESPONSE: Thank you for this comment. No further action required.

REVIEWER COMMENT: According to the study objective authors described data collection and coding, examined fatal drowning data of three countries and compared crude drowning rates. The study also examined the demographic risk factor of drowning. However, the conclusion was made only on data description.

AUTHOR RESPONSE: Thank you for this comment. We have added information about the epidemiology of drowning across the three countries in the conclusion. The revised conclusion now reads as follows:

“Drowning is a global public health threat, impacting both high income and low and middle income countries. A total of 8,176 drowning deaths were recorded across the study period, with all countries achieving at least a 10% reduction in country-level crude drowning rates across the 10 year period of the study. Among the data coding methodologies used by the three countries, there were 55 variables available for analysis of which, 19 were consistently collected and 13 were comparable. To compare the variables of location and activity, there was a need to merge categories, thus reducing the fidelity of data available. Future studies involving more countries will require work to enable comparisons to occur. The authors have identified 11 variables that would form a core minimum dataset, however there is a need for the development and validation of category definitions for location and activity variables that are consistently applied to allow for global comparison. “

REVIEWER 2 - Rajvinder Singh
REVIEWER COMMENT: A well written manuscript which contains substantial information for the selected authorship.

AUTHOR RESPONSE: Thank you for this comment. No further action required.

REVIEWER COMMENT: Study entitled ‘Exploring the burden of fatal drowning and data characteristics in three high income’ is an interesting learning and the authors have collected a useful comparative dataset on unintentional fatal drowning of Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

AUTHOR RESPONSE: Thank you for this comment. No further action required.

REVIEWER COMMENT: Undoubtedly, this manuscript is a well written and structured one; however, in my opinion the paper has only one shortcoming in regards to data analyses from Australia, Canada and New Zealand on the basis of high-income, English speaking countries, with similar culture and population distribution.

AUTHOR RESPONSE: Thank you for this comment. Yes we do note that this study only examines data from three high income countries. This was done to allow for comparison on the basis of similar countries from a socio-economic and development point of view, but also to compare the data collection processes of three countries with well-formed fatal drowning databases which are quite rare around the world.

REVIEWER COMMENT: What I feel that, there are also other few courtiers having higher mortality due to drowning at regular intervals. As this study also highlights the need for universally agreed and consistently applied categories and definitions to allow for global comparisons and proposes a core minimum dataset, then how a generalizing concept could be fixed to tackle such widely accepted problem. But I support this paper as authors have accepted their restrictions to parametric variables wherever applicable.

AUTHOR RESPONSE: Thank you for this comment. There are undoubtedly countries with much higher mortality due to drowning than the three countries profiled in this study. However many of these countries lack access to good quality data to allow us to do a detailed comparison of the epidemiology of drowning. We have therefore focused on the three high income and comparable countries with data collection systems in place, but also discussed the importance of data collection for those countries with high drowning mortality but not strong data collection systems, while also discussing the importance of consistent coding structures.
REVIEWER COMMENT: I also appreciate the way in which authors have clearly communicated the supplementary information in the manuscript. Yes, the provided introduction is relevant and practical based. The methods are also generally appropriate presenting clarification of a detail and provision of a rationale for their uses. Results are also apparent and compelling to be noticed. All the authors have also made systematic and significant contributions to the research segments.

AUTHOR RESPONSE: Thank you for this comment. No further action required.

REVIEWER COMMENT: In conclusion, this is a high-quality manuscript that has likelihood implications for futuristic approach to develop and maintain policies for preventing drowning incidences.

AUTHOR RESPONSE: Thank you for the support for our publication. No further action required.