Author’s response to reviews

Title: Indicator-Based Public Health Monitoring in Old Age in OECD Member Countries: A Scoping Review

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Author’s response to reviews:

We thank the reviewer for his helpful comments and revised the manuscript accordingly. Please find our point-by-point response to the reviewer’s comments as follows:

1. page 4, row 74-75: "Aiming to allow general health surveys to become more inclusive of older adults, we tested the effects of a sequential mixed-mode design including different contact and data collection modes like for example home visits and proxy interviews in a pilot study in 2017-2018. - i am not sure whether the above text refers to your work or the work of IMOA. if it is part of your work, then it should be part of the methodology and not the introduction. If it is part of IMOA, then is needs rephrasing since it says "we tested...." and IMOA is not your work;

Answer: It is correct that the sentence does not refer to the scoping review but to the IMOA project, in the context of which the review was conducted. To clarify this we rephrased the sentence and changed the text from “we tested the effects…” into “the effects (…) were tested” (Introduction, page 4, line 76).
2. page 4, row 76: "Methods and results are described in detail elsewhere." - maybe add something like this: "more information about the project, methodology and results are described elsewhere"; readers may want also to know more about what IMOA is (and why was is important) aside from the methodology and results;

Answer: As suggested, we rephrased the sentence, it now reads “Background, methods and results are described in detail elsewhere” (Introduction, page 4, line 78) and we also added another reference to a manuscript that will be published in June 2019 (Introduction, page 4, line 80).

3. page 4, row 78-79-80: "The development of a conceptual framework and definition of key indicators for a public health monitoring in older age took place in a structured multi-level consensus process involving a broad range of researchers and practitioners" - this sounds like part of the work you have done. if so, please move it to the methodology and make it part of the natural flow of your work;

Answer: The development of a conceptual framework and of key indicators for a public health monitoring in older age was one of the two main work packages of the IMOA project which we describe in the introduction as the frame in which the scoping review was conducted. It is therefore not part of the methods section. For clarification, we moved all text passages relating to IMOA into the second paragraph of the introduction (Introduction, page 4, lines 71-88).

4. page 13, row 312-313-314: "However, one of the main limitations of our review was the restriction to documents that were available in English or German language" - please rephrase. if this is one of the main limitations, what are the other main limitations? or you think the study has only this limitation? i would advise more specificity and mentioning of the other limitations in a text such as: "However, our study has several limitations. We believe the main one is....., but the results may also be hampered by.....". the text is just a suggestion of phrasing on how you can include several limitations and also rank them. please feel free on how to phrase it so the essence of the comment is included. - also, i think there are other strengths of this study that were not mentioned specifically - e.g. provides a first overview of the indicator-based national monitoring systems. there are also a few other. it is equally important to have a thorough description of the strengths, but also the limitations.
Answer: We thank the reviewer for raising this point. We revised the paragraph as suggested in order to clarify that we carefully considered strengths as well as limitations of the scoping review (Discussion, pages 13/14, lines 310-328).

5. page 13, row 336-337-338 "For future international efforts to implement or improve monitoring systems on health in older age we highly recommend to consider the broad range of possible approaches that have been outlined in our review before deciding on a strategy which fits the particular context, needs and expectations." - what is the "broad range of possible approaches"? please be specific. if you thing there are too many, just name the main ones.

Answer: We thank the reviewer for pointing this out. In the first sentence of the conclusion we stated that the indicator-based national public health monitoring activities of older adults which we included in the analysis were found to be highly diverse. We further elaborated that they cover a wide range of different concepts, that the development processes differ a lot, and that there is huge variety in the way health information is presented and indicators are displayed (Conclusion, page 14, lines 331-335). This is what we summarized as a “broad range of possible approaches” to implement or improve monitoring systems on health in older age. For clarification, we added a sentence at the end of the paragraph that lists the main approaches once again (Conclusion, page 14, lines 344-347).

6. i think that discussing possibility of contacting public health authorities of OECD member countries via email to learn whether indicators for health in older age were available, shows a methodological strength and should be mentioned in the methodology section. likewise, not contacting the country experts, despite the research aimed at describing and summarizing indicators that are used for health reporting and are openly available and visible to the public, could also mean that that you might have missed some in your research. sometimes the country experts can guide you to public sources that your search might have missed. they can also help validate your findings of the public sources and potentially add to it. therefore, please consider to mention this discussion in the methodology, but also that another limitation could be that your google search without the guidance/validation could have had an impact on the number of indicator sources.
Answer: This is an important issue which was previously also addressed by the second reviewer (see first point-by-point response #2.3). We explained that we had discussed the option of contacting public health authorities at the beginning of our study, but eventually decided against it, because the scoping review aimed at identifying, describing and summarizing indicators that are used for health reporting and are openly available and visible to the public. We have now added this information to the discussion section and acknowledge that taking this additional step might have revealed additional information or guided the interpretation of available information (Discussion, page 13/14, lines 320-325).