Author’s response to reviews

Title: Factors associated with the prevalence of back pain and work absence in shipyard workers

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Editor Comments:

It is essential that you address the concerns raised by reviewer 2. In addition to this, you will need to obtain professional assistance from a copyeditor to ensure that the standard of English writing is improved.

There are also some additional stylistic comments to address:

1) Title page: a title page should be included within the main Word file which contains the names of all authors, affiliations and email addresses.

A. Please see the new title page with all of the requested information.

2) Declarations: it is essential that this contains all of the subheadings, i.e.

A. We have added the following at the end of the manuscript:

Declarations

- Ethics approval and consent to participate

This study was approved by the institutional review board of Ehime University Graduate School of Medicine.

- Consent to publish not applicable

Not applicable.
- Availability of data and materials

The datasets used and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

- Competing interests

- Funding

Not applicable.

- Authors' Contributions

- Acknowledgements

- Authors' Information

Please ensure that ALL of these headings are provided within the Word file and are completed fully.

BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders operates a policy of open peer review, which means that you will be able to see the names of the reviewers who provided the reports via the online peer review system. We encourage you to also view the reports there, via the action links on the left-hand side of the page, to see the names of the reviewers.

Reviewer reports:

Prawit Janwantanakul (Reviewer 1): no further comments

Kay Cooper (Reviewer 2): Thank you for addressing the previous comments. There are still some outstanding points:

Previous Point 3: The statement about global burden of disease has been included but seems to be a bit out of place where it has been put. It is not clear what "its" refers to. Are you saying that the GBD study demonstrated as association between manufacturing and back pain? Would a discussion of the back pain literature not be better in the next paragraph where you actually discuss back pain in shipyard workers? I would suggest that the background needs some revision rather than just inserting a single sentence.

A. Page 3. Line 11 We changed “Research on the global burden of disease has demonstrated its association with back pain [1, 2].” to “Low back pain arising from ergonomic exposures at work is an important cause of disability [1]. Of all 291 conditions studied in the Global Burden of Disease 2010 Study, low back pain ranked highest in terms of causing disability [2].” We also updated Reference 1 to [1]The global burden of occupationally related low back pain: estimates

Also - the point about medical examinations - you still refer to them in the purpose but they are not mentioned in the rest of the manuscript. I still don't understand if they were part of the study or not. Who conducted them? What was done in them? Was the data they generated used in the study or not? Only the survey data appears to be reported so I remain a bit confused as to the role of the medical examinations.

A. We removed the mention of “medical examination” from page 2, line 6.

Previous point 5: I think you still misunderstand my point - I will try to clarify. Using either word ("effect" or "impact") suggests that this study has explored cause and effect. But you cannot do this with a cross-sectional study due to all the other (perhaps unknown) confounding factors. All you can state is that you have demonstrated a relationship or association between variables.

A. Thank you very much for your comment. We changed “The effect impact of medical or alternative medical consultation and change in work content / workload on the existence of back pain and work absenteeism” on page 8, line 15 to “As shown in Table 6, back pain and absence from work were associated with other factors such as medical or alternative medical consultations and change in work content/workload.”