Author’s response to reviews

Title: TREATMENT OF RECURRENT APHTHOUS STOMATITIS (RAS; APHTHAE; CANKER SORES) WITH A BARRIER FORMING MOUTH RINSE OR TOPICAL GEL FORMULATION CONTAINING HYALURONIC ACID: A RETROSPECTIVE CLINICAL STUDY

Authors:

Domenico Dalessandri (domenico.dalessandri@unibs.it)
Francesca Zotti (francesca.zotti@univr.it)
Laura Laffranchi (laura.laffranchi@unibs.it)
Marco Migliorati (marco.migliorati@unige.it)
Gaetano Isola (gisola@unict.it)
Stefano Bonetti (stefano.bonetti@unibs.it)
Luca Visconti (luca.visconti@unibs.it)

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Prof. Ziad AL-Dwairi,

thank you for considering our manuscript for publication on BMC Oral Health journal and for your interesting suggestions that we tried to incorporate into our paper. Here we report a point-by-point response with the amendments that have been made to the manuscript text and the indication of where these can be viewed. Correction and changes are all red-highlighted in the tex.

• “Although the effect of Hyaluronic acid in treatment of RAS is well known in the literature, the author did not had a hypothesis or what significance would this study will add to the scientific community.”

R: the following sentence was added into the background section (lines 117-126, page 6). “Even if hyaluronic acid efficacy in RAS treatment is well known in the literature, it is also reported that patient compliance and topical agent retention on the oral mucosa are key factors that significantly impact on its clinical efficacy. Hyaluronic acid retention is mediated and influenced by the formulation of the preparation used to convey this agent on the ulcers area, and therefore it varies not only between different products, but also between different administrations ways,
such as topical gel, spray or mouth rinse, of the same product. Patient’s compliance too is influenced by single formulation characteristics, such as for example the easiness of use but also the pleasant of both product taste and texture. For all the above mentioned reasons it is always prudent, before a priori accepting the beneficial effects of a new product, to clinically test it.”

• “The author went back to patients file in 2015 and data about size, color, type of RAS was reported in addition to pain severity. It is not clear if these data were available on the files. It is not clear if all such data were in the patients files as no clinician would report all these minor detail for each single patient unless there was a plan in 2015 to conduct such research and reported all findings.”

R: in order to increase manuscript transparency, we added to the methods section (lines 138-139, page 7) the following sentence: “(…patients…) recruited for a prospective study that, for organizational reasons, was interrupted before its completion”.

• “The other issue of concern is that there are many similar research studies with direct reporting of the findings from patients rather than getting back to patients files.”

R: we agree with the Associated Editor. Prospective randomized controlled trials are the gold standard in clinical research, as we stated also both in the discussion (lines 346-347, page 16) and conclusion (line 410-412, page 19) sections, were we underlined the limitations of the retrospective design. In this specific case there are no studies regarding these two products and we thought that, due to the impossibility for us to conduct an RCT, the publication of our available retrospective data could have been at least some interest for a general audience of dental readers.

• “In the introduction, many paragraphs were put without citing references which I believe must be updated and not going back to old references”.

R: References were added to each paragraph of the introduction section and the oldest were replaced with updated ones (Background section, lines 57-130, pages 4-6).

• “I went through the discussion and the authors repeated many results and included one table which should not be the case. Only discussion of results and comparison with other studies.”

R: Table 4 and corresponding sentences were moved into the results section (lines 311-313, page 15).

In the discussion section we repeated many results in order to highlight their interpretation while putting them in a context with each other (lesion size vs pain etc) or with other published results.
from the literature: in this revised version we tried to eliminate the redundancies. (Discussion section)

We hope that the modified manuscript is now suitable for being submitted to the reviewers. Thank you again for your significant comments.

Best regards

Francesca Zotti