Author’s response to reviews

Title: A comparison of intimate partner and other sexual assault survivors' use of different types of specialized hospital-based violence services

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Response to Reviewers

RE: Ms. Ref. No.: BMWH-D-16-00136R1

September 12, 2016

Dear Dr. van der Spuy,

We thank you for your response to the revised version of our article “A comparison of intimate partner and other sexual assault survivors’ use of different types of specialized hospital-based violence services”. We have responded to the one remaining concern below.
Editor# 1 Comment # 1: Thank you for re-submitting your manuscript. My biggest concern about the revision is that Reviewer #1 Comment #4 (perform regression analysis) was not taken. I understand you would like your study to be explanatory and the current analysis meets YOUR objective. But I agree with Reviewer 1 – the current analysis is not strong enough to have any meaningful conclusions. Please conduct regression analysis and modify the result and discussion sections accordingly.

Response: A multivariate logistic regression analysis examining the relationship between assailant type and any service use, adjusting for any other important factors, could be an additional and appropriate statistical approach in a sample with more variability on any form of service use as an outcome. However, in our sample almost 100% of clients had used at least one service, precluding such an approach.

To address this concern, however, we have revised the manuscript in several places:

We have added the following to the Data analysis subsection:

For the bivariate analyses, we collapsed assailant type into three categories allowing for comparisons among our categories of interest: current or former intimate partner, other known assailant [parent/guardian/other relative, acquaintance, friend, co-worker, authority figure, sex trade customer], and stranger. In the analyses, cross-tabulation with Chi-square analyses were performed to describe the relationship between assailant type and service utilization, as well as time from assault to presentation at hospital, and client and assault characteristics. Additionally, a multivariate logistic regression analysis examining the potential associations between relationship type and any services use, adjusting for potential confounders, was considered. However, almost 100% of clients in our study had used at least one service, precluding such an approach.

We have also acknowledged this issue in the Limitations subsection:
Finally, future research conducted in samples with more variability on the use of services post-sexual assault, should include multivariate analyses.

We have also made the following minor adjustments to the Background of the Abstract:

To address this gap, we described the use of acute care services as well as a broad range of survivor and assault characteristics across women assaulted by current or former intimate partners, other known assailants, and strangers.

We also further clarified our approach in the Introduction:

Our objectives were to describe the use of acute care services as well as a broad range of survivor and assault characteristics across women assaulted by current or former intimate partners, other known assailants, and strangers. This information could aid in the identification of any potential gaps in service utilization for these women and inform discussion of whether the services offered may be sensitive to their specific needs.

We believe that this paper is of value to the BMC Women’s Health readership given that there is such a paucity of studies conducted in this area. The bivariate analyses presented in this study are actually in keeping with the statistical methods of the few studies previously conducted and offer novel insight into sexual assault service use by assailant type. This is the first multicentre, province-wide, prospective sexual assault study in Canada with a focus on the survivor-assailant relationship and uptake of specialized acute care hospital-based sexual assault services.

Thank you for your further consideration of publication of our manuscript.

Sincerely,

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