Author’s response to reviews

Title: Cervical microbiota in women with cervical intra-epithelial neoplasia, prior to and after local excisional treatment, a Norwegian cohort study.

Authors:

Johanna Wiik (johanna.wiik@gu.se; johanna.wiik@gmail.com)

Verena Sengpiel (verena.sengpiel@obgyn.gu.se)

Maria Kyrgiou (m.kyrgiou@imperial.ac.uk)

Staffan Nilsson (staffan.nilsson@chalmers.se)

Anita Mitra (a.mitra@imperial.ac.uk)

Tom Tanbo (ttanbo@ous-hf.no)

Christine Monceyron-Jonassen (Christine.Monceyron.Jonassen@so-hf.no)

Tone Møller Tannæs (t.m.tannas@medisin.uio.no)

Katrine Sjøborg (Katrine.Donvold.Sjoborg@so-hf.no)

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Author’s response to reviews:

To

BMC Women’s Health Editorial Team

London

United Kingdom

Gothenburg, January 21th, 2019
Dear Editor,

Thank you for considering our paper "Cervical microbiota in women with cervical intra-epithelial neoplasia, prior to and after local excisional treatment, a Norwegian cohort study" (BMWH-D-18-00449) for publication in BMC Women's Health.

We wish to thank the editor and the reviewers for their valuable comments on our manuscript.

We have modified the manuscript according to the suggested improvements. A detailed response to all comments follows below.

Editor comments and our response:

1. Author’s emails

Please include in the title page the email addresses of all authors. The corresponding author should still be indicated. Please ensure these email addresses match the email addresses provided in the editorial manager system.

Thank you. We have now added the author’s emails after the information about corresponding author on page 2, line 4-7.

2. Headings and formatting

In order to be in line with journal requirements, please use the following headings within your manuscript: Background, Methods, Results, Discussion and Conclusion.

Thank you. We have changed our heading Material and Methods to Methods, page 5, line 4 and Conclusions and Future research to Conclusion, page 17, line 12.

We have kept our subheadings to make the paper easier to read. If the editorial board disagrees with this decision we will accept that the subheadings are removed. We have also changed the heading Abbreviations to List of Abbreviations according to the Submission Guidelines, page 18, line 4.

3. Figures

Please place your figure legends under a separate heading of 'Figure Legends' after the References.
Figures should be provided as separate files, and each figure of a manuscript should be submitted as a single file.

If figure titles/legends are within the main text of the manuscript, please move them.

Figure files should contain only the image/graphic, as well as any associated keys/annotations. If titles or legends are present within the figure files, please remove them.

Please ensure that all figures/tables and supplementary files are cited within the text. Any items which are not cited may be deleted by our production department upon publication.

Thank you. A heading of Figure Legends is placed after the references with explanation of the figures and we have now separate files for each figure, Figure 1 and Figure 2 (A and B). We have removed titles/legends in the figure files.

4. Please amend your Table numbers accordingly.

You currently have Table 1, 2, 4, 5, 6; and Supp Table 1, 2, 2.

Thank you for pointing out this mistake.

We have corrected the table numbering to Table 1-5 (changes made page 11, line 7 and line 9, page 12 line 6 and 8 and page 13, line 10-13) and put the Supporting information in Additional file 1, Supporting information Table S 1-3 (changes made page 14, line 3-4+ 11 and page 22, line 5 and 13). We have also corrected the heading in Additional file 1 to Additional file 1, Supporting information.

5. Clean manuscript Final Checks

At this stage, please upload your manuscript as a single, final, clean version that does not contain any tracked changes, comments, highlights, strikethroughs or text in different colours.

All relevant tables/figures/additional files should also be clean versions. Figures (and additional files) should remain uploaded as separate files.

Please remove any files that should not be published along with your manuscript e.g. cover letters, reviewer responses, guidelines etc., ready for publication.
Reviewer 1, Yi-Chang Su:

Minor Essential Revisions:

1. In the title of the article: The results of the study are limited to the Norwegian region only.

   We have modified the title to “Cervical microbiota in women with cervical intra-epithelial neoplasia, prior to and after local excisional treatment, a Norwegian cohort study” after suggestion from the reviewer.

2. In the discussion: The limitations on this study must still be clearly stated, such as the menopausal status, participants a few days before the sampling time whether there is sexual activity and menstruation, and antibiotics/probiotics for other diseases. The purpose is to make future correlation studies aware of the interference factors that influence the results of the study.

   Thank you. We agree with the reviewer that these background factors are important when interpreting the results and important to have in mind when planning future studies.

   Under Methods /Study Population we write “We excluded women on long term antibiotics (page 5, line 10) and follow up samples of women that required antibiotics after LEEP” (page 5, line 12-13).

   We have also stated under Strengths and limitations that; “the history of recent sexual activity, the menopausal status and the use of postmenopausal hormone replacement therapy was unknown and these factors may have an impact on the results”; page 16 and line 17-19.

   We also write “The exact time of last menstruation was unknown but none of the samples were collected during menstruation”. Page 16, line 24-25.

   After this comment from the reviewer we have now added;

   “When planning similar studies in the future we recommend detailed collection of information about menopausal status, use of hormone replacement therapy, the exact time of menstruation, menstrual hygiene practices, use of vaginal douching, use of hormonal or barrier contraceptive products, sexual behaviour, numbers of sexual partners, history of recent sexual activity and use of antibiotics/probiotics (oral or topical) since these factors could affect the cervical microbiota “ (Page 17, line 5-10).
We hope that you now find the manuscript suitable for publication in BMC Womens Health. We look forward to your response.

On behalf of all the authors,

Sincerely

Johanna Wiik, MD, PhD student
Dept of Obstetrics and Gynaecology
Sahlgrenska University Hospital/Östra
SE-416 85 Gothenburg