Author’s response to reviews

Title: Economic burden of symptomatic iron deficiency - A Survey among Swiss women

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Cover letter "Economic burden of symptomatic iron deficiency - A Survey among Swiss women" (BMWH-D-17-00064R3)

Editor Comments:

- Please format large numbers as 1,000 for one thousand.

Author’s comment: We have changed all numbers as 1,000 for one thousand.

- In the Ethics approval and consent to participate statement in the Declarations, please include more detail of the relevant laws and codes with regards to ethical approval or waiver thereof. Please also include a summary of the informed consent procedure.

Author’s comment: There was a written informed consent process at the beginning of the survey: all participants were explicitly asked before the survey started if they consent to take part in the survey. The participation in the panel was voluntary and non-binding. No specific ethical approval was required for this type of research, as no identifiers were collected. The survey among consumer panels was conducted in line with the Swiss law of data protection and the national and international codes on market and social research guidelines which also include ethical principles.

>>Section 2.1. and section 5 were adapted accordingly.
- In the Funding statement in the Declarations, please include the role of the funding body in the study.

Author’s comment: This research was funded by Vifor AG, Switzerland by an educational grant. The funding body had no active role in the study.

>> Section 5 was adapted accordingly.

- Please remove all color and shading from your tables. Full guidelines for tables are available here: https://bmcwomenshealth.biomedcentral.com/submission-guidelines/preparing-your-manuscript#preparing+tables

Author’s comment: we have adapted the colors/ shading of the tables accordingly.

>>see Tables 1-4

Reviewer reports:

Michèle Dramaix-Wilmet, Ph.D. (Reviewer 1): The authors provided satisfactory answers to my questions and their modifications in the text are also relevant. However, I still have two minor comments.

In my 1st review:

The question about Figure 1 was: "266 women (18%) with missing information were eliminated, were the characteristics of these women not too different from those of women included in the analyses?"

And the author's response is: "given that some information on their iron deficiency status was missing, we were forced to exclude them from the sample. We are not able to judge, whether these individuals were different from the rest of the sample".

My new comment is: I agree with the authors to say that women with ID status missing must be excluded from the analyzes. But my question was about the characteristics of these women. Were differences in age, civil status, region … (characteristics described in table 1) between excluded and non-excluded women? Is it possible to analyze these differences or at least some of them?
Authors’ comment: Thank you for this comment. We fully agree that this would be very interest to assess. But we have not collected any additional information from those persons that were screened-out by the first screen-out questions. Therefore, we can not analyze the excluded women versus the non-excluded women regarding their demographic characteristics or differences.

The question about the hypothesis tests was: "The methodology refers to 3 tests: t, Mann-Whitney and Chi²; where are these tests applied?"

And the author's response is: "Discrete numeric/ continuous variables were analyzed with a t-test (for non-skewed data) or a non-parametric test (e.g. Mann-Whitney U test for skewed data). Bivariate associations of categorical variables were assessed with the chi squared test. Mean number of consultations and mean duration of sick leave showed a skewed distribution. Therefore, we used a non-parametric test. We understand your point, but we decided to remain the description of the statistics and results as it is. Otherwise, we would need to add for all p-values the applied test. We think it is more reader-friendly, if we describe in the methods the different tests and How / when they were applied."

My new comment is: I agree with the authors to say that adding the applied test for all p-values can make the text less readable. However in the text and tables, I found only 3 p-values: 2 p.8 (Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test) and 1 for the Spearman correlation coefficient (p. 10). So my question is: where in the results, were t-test and Chi squared test applied?

Authors’ comment: This is a very valuable point. Indeed, we only used the Mann-Whitney-Test and the Spearman correlation coefficient. We have adapted the Methods accordingly.

>> Please see section 2.3.