Author’s response to reviews

Title: EPIDEMIOLOGICAL AND HISTOPATHOLOGICAL PROFILE OF MALIGNANT MELANOMA IN MALAWI

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Version: 2 Date: 31 Jan 2019

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REVIEWER 1

Abstract
- results: change from “male” to “males”
* This change has been made.

- conclusion: Can delete the first sentence. Conclusion also says that “surprising frequency of MM suggests that the burden of disease may be under-appreciated.” What is the frequency? Why is this frequency surprising?
* The first and second (on frequency) sentences have been deleted and replaced by one sentence that reads “Our study shows that malignant melanoma occurs in black people in Malawi and may be an under-appreciated malignancy.”
*The reference on cutaneous glabrous skin has been deleted as recommended. Perhaps include the reference from the discussion regarding genetic differences between African Americans and black Africans. Some readers may think that because cutaneous melanoma is largely UV-related, populations with similar skin pigmentation would have similar rates of melanoma* *This has been done.*

**Methods**

Would add a line about how statistics were calculated

*The following sentence has been added: “We used proportions and medians to summarize the distribution of categorical variables and continuous variables, respectively. Fisher’s exact test was used to assess the association between gender and acral lentiginous melanoma. All analyses were performed using Stata software, version 14.1 (StataCorp LP, College Station, Texas, USA)”*

**Results**

In table 2, please say what the numbers in parentheses indicate

*Numbers in brackets indicate incompletely excised melanomas. This sentence was already included under “legend”.*

**Discussion**

First paragraph, please site the systematic review. Any difference in the conclusions seen between your work and the systematic review?

*The main aim of this paragraph was to show the duration of the study and the number of cases that got in comparison to other studies. This paragraph has therefore been deleted following the recommendation.*

Would consider removing the discussion of how many years the study was done in even if the study was done in a shorter amount of time compared to other studies, it doesn’t give more weight to the study results.

*The entire paragraph has been deleted.*

(page 15, line 15) second paragraph spell out “to” rather than have the colon.

*This has been done.*

(page 15, line 33) please clarify wording “our study could not infer on incidence”

*The data used in this study is from a pathology database and is not from the population based cancer registry that has a defined denominator needed for calculation of incidence. This statement has been added to the manuscript.*

Third paragraph (page 15, lines 39-44) These would seem more like limitations

*These sentences have been moved to limitations.*

(page 16, line 28-40) in the discussion about trauma causing ALM, please cite source. Why would
trauma cause ALM? Perhaps instead of discussing trauma with lacking statistics, you could expound more on any genetic differences
*It is an established fact that repeated trauma to the sole is associated with ALM. More references including WHO skin pathology handbook have been included.

Limitations: change the first sentence to “a few” or “several”
*This has been done

Conclusion
Could consider deleting the second line because readers may not likely expect that this report would encompass all cases or melanoma seen during this time period
*This has been done.