Author’s response to reviews

Title: Knowledge and Attitudes of Physicians toward Research Ethics and scientific Misconduct in Lebanon

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dr. Anne Menard
Editor in Chief, BMC Medical Ethics

Re: Manuscript Revision

Thursday, March 19, 2020

Re: Knowledge and Attitudes of Physicians toward Research Ethics and scientific Misconduct in Lebanon

Dear Dr. Menard,

On behalf of my colleagues, I am returning to BMC Medical Ethics a revised version of a manuscript entitled “Knowledge and Attitudes of Physicians toward Research Ethics and scientific Misconduct in Lebanon”.

The authors thank the editor and reviewers for the constructive suggestions they provided. Those comments are all valuable and very helpful for revising and improving our paper. We have studied and evaluated the comments carefully and have made the amended corrections. We believe that this version has addressed all the editor’s and reviewers’ concerns. Please find below a point-by-point reply to all comments.

Sincerely Yours,

Najlaa Mashaal, M.D., Ph.D.
Dean, Faculty of Medicine
Beirut Arab University
P.O. Box 11-50-20
Reviewers’ Comments:

Rebecca D. Pentz (Reviewer 1): The authors have done a good job of responding to the reviewers’ comments. A few areas need more editing:

Line 113 "To note, the faculties of Medicine in Lebanon are geographically diverse." PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE IS NO ETHNIC DIVERSITY. ARE ALL PARTICIPANTS ARAB?

Authors’ Response: We thank the reviewer for her comprehensive assessment of our manuscript. We meant by geographically diverse that they cover different geographic areas in Lebanon. We have now modified the statement to address this point (lines 113-115). Also, all participants are Arab, and this has been added (line 108).

Line 155 "Then it was done every 2 months to ensure that a sufficient number of participants are enrolled and that they meet eligibility criteria and the targeted ethical goals outlined in the grant proposal. " IF YOU MENTION THE ETHICAL GOALS OF THE GRANT, YOU SHOULD SPECIFY WHAT THOSE GOALS WERE

Authors’ Response: We thank the reviewer for her comment. The statement has been modified accordingly (line 158): … eligibility criteria and the targeted ethical goals outlined in the grant proposal including providing consents to participate and publish anticipated data collected.

Line 248 "As outlined, 52% of physicians reported witnessing scientific misconduct at some period of their careers, mainly about disagreement about authorship." AS STATED THIS MISREPRESENTS THE DATA. PLEASE INCLUDE FALSIFICATION AND FABRICATION OF DATA AND PLAGERISM….JUST DON'T CALL THOSE DISAGREEMENTS. THEY ARE STILL MISCONDUCT.

Authors’ Response: We thank the reviewer for her comment. We agree that the above statement needs to be better clarified (lines 250-253): “As outlined, 58.5% of physicians reported witnessing scientific misconduct in terms of plagiarism at some period of their careers, 46.7% reported witnessing data falsification, and 51.9% reported witnessing data fabrication. Besides, 52% of physicians reported scientific misbehavior mainly about disagreement authorship.”

THE CONCLUSION COULD BE MADE CLEARER. AS IS THE STATEMENTS ARE NOT SPECIFIC ENOUGH IN REPORTING THE RESULTS.
In conclusions, our study demonstrated the impact of research ethics training (SPECIFY THE IMPACT - INCREASED KNOWLEDGE AND RESULTED IN MORE POSITIVE ATTITUDES) on the development of physicians' knowledge and positive attitudes toward research ethics. Results reflected (DEMONSTRATED OR SHOWED) the high rates of research misconduct and scientific misbehavior perceived by our participants where almost half of physicians reported witnessing scientific misconduct at some period of their careers. Significant associations (EXPLAIN THE DIRECTION OF THESE ASSOCIATIONS) were found between the awareness and professional status of physicians, prior research experience, and prior research ethics training. A significant moderate positive correlation was also demonstrated between research ethics knowledge and physicians' attitudes toward practices of research ethics. Our study also shed the light on the importance of reinforcing the function and the role of research ethics committees in establishing institutional and national educational programs in research ethics, in accordance with international effort to enhance research ethics principles knowledge between researchers.

Authors’ Response: We thank the reviewer for her comment. The conclusion has been modified to address the reviewer’s concerns (lines 356-372):

“In conclusion, our study demonstrated that Lebanese physicians have low knowledge regarding research ethics guidelines and regulations; however, they have positive attitudes towards practices in research ethics. Moreover, research ethics training positively impact the development of physicians’ knowledge and attitudes toward research ethics, where majority declared being aware of research ethics guidelines which reflects increased knowledge. Besides, a significant moderate positive correlation was found between research ethics regulations knowledge and physicians’ attitudes toward practices of research ethics, signifying positive attitudes. Significant positive associations were found between the awareness and professional status of physicians, prior research experience, and prior research ethics training. A significant moderate positive correlation was also demonstrated between research ethics knowledge and physicians’ attitudes toward practices of research ethics. Results showed the high rates of research misconduct and scientific misbehavior perceived by our participants where almost half of physicians reported witnessing scientific misconduct at some period of their careers. Our study also shed the light on the importance of reinforcing the function and the role of research ethics committees in establishing institutional and national educational programs in research ethics, in accordance with international effort to enhance research ethics principles knowledge between researchers.”

David Resnik (Reviewer 2): Good job with revisions. No additional comments.

Authors’ Response: We thank the reviewer for his comprehensive assessment of our manuscript.

Zurina Mahadi (Reviewer 3): The corrected conclusion still does not focus on the researchers’ knowledge, attitude, awareness and perceptions but still focusing on the impacts of research ethics training and the function and role of research ethics committee which were not the main subjects of the research as reflected in the questionnaires. The recommendation from the author for the importance of attending the research ethics training should be derived from the findings on the knowledge, attitude, awareness and perceptions of the researchers.

Authors’ Response: We thank the reviewer for her comprehensive assessment of our manuscript. The conclusion section was revised and modified to address the reviewer’s concerns (lines 356-372):
“In conclusion, our study demonstrated that Lebanese physicians have low knowledge regarding research ethics guidelines and regulations; however, they have positive attitudes towards practices in research ethics. Moreover, research ethics training positively impact the development of physicians’ knowledge and attitudes toward research ethics, where majority declared being aware of research ethics guidelines which reflects increased knowledge. Besides, a significant moderate positive correlation was found between research ethics regulations knowledge and physicians’ attitudes toward practices of research ethics, signifying positive attitudes. Significant positive associations were found between the awareness and professional status of physicians, prior research experience, and prior research ethics training. A significant moderate positive correlation was also demonstrated between research ethics knowledge and physicians’ attitudes toward practices of research ethics. Results showed the high rates of research misconduct and scientific misbehavior perceived by our participants where almost half of physicians reported witnessing scientific misconduct at some period of their careers. Our study also shed the light on the importance of reinforcing the function and the role of research ethics committees in establishing institutional and national educational programs in research ethics, in accordance with international effort to enhance research ethics principles knowledge between researchers.”