Author’s response to reviews

Title: Reliability and methodology of quantitative assessment of harvested and unharvested patellar tendons of ACL injured athletes using ultrasound tissue characterization

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Reply to Editor 10th June 2019

Editor Comments:

Comment 1. In your Ethics approval and consent to participate subsection of the Declarations please clarify whether consent was obtained in written or verbal form. If consent was obtained verbally please provide reasoning along with a statement as to whether this method was explicitly approved by your ethics committee.

Reply: Written informed consent was obtained from every participant or legal responsible.

A written consent in English and Arabic which included a full explanation of the assessments was given to each participant and/ or legal guardian at arrival. The father or the mother should read, understand and sign the written informed consent to authorize the participation of their child (under 18) in any study performed in Qatar. Additionally, verbal explanation was given when requested, in their preferred language.

Action: Authors added “written” and “legal guardian” in the methods section, page 5, line 104, and in the declarations section, page 17, line 402.
Comment 2. It is noticed that you detail participants as young as the age of 16 in your study. Please clarify the age of adulthood and/or the age at which individuals are legally able to provide their own consent for participation in research in your country. If any participants were under the age of consenting for themselves please clarify as to whether appropriate parental or legal guardian consent was provided on their behalf in the Ethics approval and consent to participate subsection of the declaration.

Reply: At this stage, the age of the participant was not relevant for the study. We did not perform any comparison between groups when the maturity of the tendon should be considered. It was just a test re-test where same tendons were scanned and analyzed two times, either by the same examiner or by two different examiners. The device, the software and the examiners were tested, not the tendons.

For future studies however, when the tendons will be tested, then the age of the participants will be taken into consideration for the comparisons, and athletes under 18 years will not be compared to fully mature athletes.

Action: authors decided to remove the age range from the inclusion criteria in the methods section, page 5, line 101.

However, authors included in the methods section, page 5, line 104 and in the declarations section, page 17, line 402 that “Written informed consent was obtained from each participant or legal guardian”.

Comment 3. In your Funding section, please also state the role of the funding body in the design of the study; collection, analysis, and interpretation of data; and in writing the manuscript.

Reply: The Qatar National Library has had no other role in the current study rather than funding the publication costs.

The Qatar National Library only requests that it is mentioned in the manuscript that QNL has funded the publication of the article, as we have included in the funding section, page 18, line 416.
In the next phase of the uploading procedure, we could not find Qatar National Library among the funding sources, thus we have not included anyone there.

Researchers in this study are working full time at Aspetar as clinicians, and any extra activities as Ph.D. or master’s studies are done on their spare time.

Action: None.

Comment 4. 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.

Action: Authors have cleaned any marked text or tracked changes in the manuscript and tables.

Tables were included in the manuscript file after Tables titles and notes in pages 28-34.

Only figures were uploaded separately.