Author’s response to reviews

Title: Quality and Continuity of Information Between Primary Care Physicians and Rheumatologists

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Author’s response to reviews:

Re: Manuscript BRHM-D-18-00064

Response to editor’s comments

March 6, 2018

Dear Editors

Thank you for the opportunity to revise and resubmit our manuscript entitled "Quality and Continuity of Information Between Primary Care Physicians and Rheumatologists" (BRHM-D-18-00064) to BMC Rheumatology. Below we have responded to your comments with care.
Editor Comments:

1. It has come to our attention that within your manuscript there is significant text overlap with other publications, particularly:


While we understand that you may wish to express some of the same ideas contained in these publications, please be aware that we cannot condone the use of text from previously published work. Please rephrase this section in your own words to avoid direct overlap (please note, we cannot accept direct textual overlap with any previously published works even if the authors of the work are yourselves). Please be informed that we cannot proceed with handling your manuscript before this issue is resolved, and the sections of text in question have been reformulated.

AUTHORS’ RESPONSE:

Re: Widdifield et al paper – Both this previous publication and the current one are derived from the same overarching study/dataset, where we abstracted data for different purposes. We have edited the text in the methods and verified that text in the intro and discussion do not overlap.

Re: Hazlewood paper

We removed the text (Page 3, 2nd last sentence of the introduction) “Inefficiencies in the traditional referral process as a result of poor communication may delay access to rheumatology care and impede accurate and rapid diagnoses and treatment” which also seems to appear in the Hazlewood paper. This sentence appears to be redundant following the previous sentence which captures this concept.

In the Discussion, Page 10, where we cite & discuss the Hazlewood paper, we have edited these 2 sentences down to 1 for brevity: “Indeed, the majority of rheumatologists recently surveyed in another Canadian setting were not satisfied with the quality and completeness of referral letters, making it difficult to triage patients appropriately, resulting in requests for more information (such as laboratory test results) and contributing to delays (8).”

2. Please confirm whether informed consent, written or verbal, was obtained from all participants and clearly state this in your "Ethics and Consent to Participate" section. If verbal, please state
the reason and whether the ethics committee approved this procedure. If the need for consent was waived by an ethics committee or is deemed unnecessary according to national regulations, please clearly state this, including the name of the committee or a reference to the relevant legislation.

AUTHORS’ RESPONSE: Informed consent was waived. In this section we have expanded to state:

Ethics and Consent to Participate: This project has been approved by a privacy impact assessment at ICES and Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, Toronto, Canada. ICES is a prescribed entity under section 45 of Ontario’s Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA). Section 45 is the provision that enables analysis and compilation of statistical information related to the management, evaluation and monitoring of, allocation of resources to, and planning for the health system. Section 45 authorizes health information custodians to disclose personal health information to a prescribed entity, like ICES, without consent for such purposes.

3. Please represent authors' names using their full initials, not their full name, in the Authors’ Contributions section. If there are any duplicated initials, please differentiate them to make it clear that the initials refer to separate authors.

AUTHORS’ RESPONSE: We have replaced full names with initials.

4. The individual contributions of all authors to the manuscript should be specified in the Authors’ Contributions section.

AUTHORS’ RESPONSE: We have added the individual contributions rather than stated “All authors”.

5. In the “Funding” section of your declarations, please clarify the role of the funding body in the design of the study and collection, analysis, and interpretation of data and in writing the manuscript.

AUTHORS’ RESPONSE: We have added to the Funding section: “The funding agency played no role in the design of the study, collection, analysis, and interpretation of data, nor any role in writing the manuscript.”
6. Please remove the funding information from the Acknowledgements and include it in the Funding section instead. If you have no further acknowledgements please put “Not Applicable” in the Acknowledgements section.

AUTHORS’ RESPONSE: We have made this correction.

7. Please provide a list of all the abbreviations used in the manuscript. This list should be placed just before the Declarations section. All abbreviations should still be defined in the text at first use.

AUTHORS’ RESPONSE: We have made this correction.

8. Please rename Introduction to Background.

AUTHORS’ RESPONSE: We have made this correction.

9. Please add a “Conclusions” section after the “Discussion” section. This should state clearly the main conclusions of the research article and give a clear explanation of their importance and relevance.

AUTHORS’ RESPONSE: We have made this correction.

10. Please relocate your tables after the references.

AUTHORS’ RESPONSE: We have made this correction.

11. Thank you for providing your manuscript with track changes as a supplementary file. However, at this stage it is not required and so we kindly ask that you remove it from your manuscript.

AUTHORS’ RESPONSE: We have made this correction.

Thank you for the opportunity to make these corrections.