

Response letter

Name of Journal: *World Journal of Gastrointestinal Surgery*

ESPS Manuscript NO: 27332

Manuscript Type: Systematic Reviews

Critical analysis of the literature investigating urogenital function preservation following robotic rectal cancer surgery

Response to comments from reviewer 00505440:

Comment:

The study is erroneously listed as an Editorial rather than a systematic review.
Please correct this.

Reply:

This has been done, see title page.

Comment:

In Figure 1, the reasons for excluding the other studies needs to be excluded.

Reply:

We have excluded this.

Comment:

The Table legends are too brief and uninformative. They need to be elaborated to explain to the reader what is being depicted.

Reply:

We have elaborated the Table legends. A more extended explanation of the tables contents has been given. Please see corrections highlighted in yellow in all tables.

Comments:

There is use the asterisk sign in the tables - the meaning of which is left unexplained.

Reply:

The asterisk represented the presence of the factor listed in the corresponding column. We have removed the asterisks and replaced it with a YES or NO answer. We believe this is clearer. However, we are open to any other suggestions that might make the table easier to comprehend. These changes are highlighted in yellow.

Comments:

Please avoid using the names of Journals in the columns as has been done in Table 1
Please avoid the use of non-standard abbreviations

Reply:

The names of the journals have been removed. The use of non-standard abbreviations has been removed from the entire manuscript.

Comments:

The statements at the end of every table make no sense! Are these abbreviations used in the table? If they are, then the sentence following Table 1 makes no sense

Reply:

The statements in the end of each table are the abbreviations. These have been changed in accordance with the format for manuscript revision. They are highlighted in yellow.

Comment:

Table 3 must be deleted as it is redundant

Reply:

We have deleted table 3.

Response to comments from reviewer 00505440:

Comment:

The material, method, search and selection of the studies were excellent. However the results part of the study looks like unsatisfying. As systematic review or a meta-analysis the raw data of several trials should be pooled and the cumulative results should be mathematically

Reply:

The original studies included in this review possess several differences in terms of outcome reporting and methodology. The majority of the data is heterogeneous in nature, not permitting a meta-analysis. For this reason we decided not to mathematically combine the data and draw combined averages. However, following your suggestion we have added the combined number of patients from all the studies, stated how many of them had robotic, laparoscopic and open rectal cancer surgery and how many of those had their urogenital function assessed via means of functional questionnaires. We have better explained this on our manuscript, please refer to the changes we have made which are highlighted in yellow on the following sections: Results: Original studies, Outcome assessment, Quality of included original studies.

Response to scientific editor:

Dear scientific editor, we have made the changes on our manuscript as per your recommendations. We have provided a signed PDF file of the conflict of interest. This study did not use any biostatistics so a biostatistics statement is not applicable. We have included a data sharing statement and included the PDF format. We have changed the abstract according to the instructions. We have provided an audio core

tip. We have added the comments section. We have also put the tables after the bibliography section. All alterations on the manuscript are highlighted in yellow.