

Cover Letter in Response to Reviewer's Comments for World Journal of Clinical Cases

Professors Bloomfield, Peng and Vento
Editors-in-Chief
World Journal of Clinical Cases

21 October 2019

Re Manuscript NO: 50875: "Treatment of hemorrhoids: A survey of surgical practice in Australia and New Zealand"

Dear Professors Bloomfield, Peng and Vento,

We are grateful for the reviewers' comments on our manuscript. Please find below a point-by-point response to the questions presented by the reviewers (reviewer's comments in italics).

Reviewer:

1

Comments to the Author

This is a nice study investigating clinical practitioners' responses to current medical guidelines. I only have two questions.

1. Firstly, I suggest authors revise the title, indicating the study was a survey. Current title may be misunderstood as an expert consensus statement of hemorrhoid management.

Thank you for this suggestion, we agree and have revised the title accordingly.

2. Secondly, the number of respondents were the main concern. Only 82 gave responses. Indeed, this number is not identical, like authors mentioned in the limitation. In addition, authors only investigate surgeons from the single society. I believe some surgeons may be the initiators of the clinical practice guideline. This may lead to extra bias of the investigation. And what about the opinion outside the society? The general applicability of the conclusion may also be uncertain.

Thank you for these comments. We agree with the criticism of the suboptimal response rate and the study being from a single society.

However, approximately half of the topics in our study demonstrate equipoise based on low or moderate levels of evidence. It highlights that areas with low quality of evidence are least likely to be adopted in clinical practice. These areas warrant further research, in the hope that better quality evidence will lead to an increase in surgeon compliance with guidelines and subsequently improved patient outcomes. High

quality research in these areas is likely to benefit the clinical practice guidelines internationally.

Reviewer:

2

Comments to the Author

This study evaluates to what degree colorectal surgeons in Australia and New Zealand agree with and apply clinical practice guidelines for hemorrhoid treatment. Seventeen clinical scenarios were provided, with choices, including the current guidelines, and responses were recorded and analyzed. 47% of the scenarios showed considerable disagreement among physicians, and one other scenario, a majority disagreed with the guidelines. The areas of disagreement (among physicians - leading to "equipoise" - less than 70% consensus, and also in one case 87% disagreed with the guidelines) were associated with low to moderate evidence. The authors suggest these to be areas of future research. This is a useful study to delineate those areas in the field that require stronger evidence for guidelines. The paper is acceptable for publication.

We are very grateful for these encouraging comments. Thank you.

One optional suggestion would be for the authors to expand a bit more on the correlation between disagreement and quality of evidence. It would seem that the former derives from the latter; that there is insufficient evidence backing some of these guidelines so as to convince more than 70% of the physicians to agree with current guidelines. A conclusion could be to specifically prioritize evidence quality for those guidelines. Perhaps as well, as a follow-up, interrogate the physicians as to the reasons for their disagreement.

This is a valuable point which we have now incorporated in the revised manuscript for our conclusion.

All the above changes have been reflected in the tracked manuscript in red text.

We hope you find the revised manuscript acceptable for publication. Thank you once again for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

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