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Science Editor  
World Journal of Orthopedics

Dear Editor and Reviewers,

Thank you for reviewing our manuscript for publication in the World Journal of Orthopedics. We have reviewed the comments and revised our manuscript accordingly. Specifically, we have made the following changes as per the reviewers' comments:

*Reviewer 1*

- The authors comments on the document need to be omitted.

Thank you for this comment. We have omitted all comments from the document.

- It is not clear how many patients had hand syndactyly or foot syndactyly or both.

Thank you for this comment. We only included cases of hand syndactyly and we do not have data on the diagnosis of foot syndactyly (please see methods).

- It would be pertinent to know, whether the patients with hand or foot syndactyly have equal tendencies of undergoing surgical corrections?

Thank you for this comment. This would be an interesting question but it is beyond the scope of the current study.

- Discussion: first paragraph is repetitive and may be omitted.

Thank you for this comment. We have removed the non-essential parts of this paragraph.

- It is not clear how many of the syndactyly cases were associated with symptoms of other organ-systems.

Thank you for this comment. Unfortunately, we do not have data regarding rates of disorders related to other organ-systems. We focused this study on the incidence of simple and complicated syndactyly (please see methods).

- The authors state, "We used Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) codes and ICD-9 procedure codes to identify surgical procedures, and we were particularly interested in procedures relating to syndactyly (ICD 9: 86.85, CPT: 26560, 26561, 26562, 28280, 28345)". However, no data is presented with respect to surgical procedures performed.

Thank you for this comment. The purpose of this study was to determine the incidence of syndactyly and rates of surgical management. We included relevant CPT codes which are commonly used in practice, and we also used ICD-9 procedure codes to confirm the diagnosis of

syndactyly. We have also discussed the rates of skin grafting using relevant codes. Unfortunately, we are unable to comment on the types of procedures being performed for syndactyly in the current study.

- In the Abstract, the authors state, “Approximately 72% of surgeries were performed at teaching hospitals, and 54% of procedures were performed by orthopaedic surgeons”. However, no data regarding this statement is give in the main text.

Thank you for this comment. We have added this data in the results section.

- Fig. 2. It would be worthwhile to tag the data collection points on the map.

Thank you for this comment. The data in SPARCS derived from all non-federal facilities in New York State, and it would not be possible to label all of these facilities. Instead, we have provided a geographic description in the results section.

#### *Reviewer 2*

- Title: Please change the title as following: “Epidemiology of Syndactyly in New York State”

Thank you for this comment. We have changed the title per your recommendation.

- Abstract: The ‘aim’ should be revised and changes according to the title of the manuscript should be applied.

Thank you for this comment. We have made this change.

- The sentence ‘surgical management’ should be omitted. At line 65 the authors probably mean ‘8 per 10,000 live births’ instead of ‘8 per 100,000 live births’.

Thank you for this comment. We have made this change.

- Introduction: The authors state clearly the aim of their study: ‘In this study, we use a state database.....affects operative management. (lines 108-111), which is not to present the surgical management of syndactyly, but the percentage of patients undergoing surgery, the timing of surgery and other factors.

Thank you for this comment. We agree with the reviewer and have clarified our purpose in the abstract and introduction.

- Material-Methods: Please mention the types of procedures related to syndactyly and to the different ICD 9 codes and CPTs (86.85, CPT: 26560, 26561, 26562, 28280, 28345).

Thank you for this comment. All of these codes are used for the management of syndactyly, and we included procedures that had an associated ICD-9 procedure code for syndactyly. As

mentioned in the previous comment, we are unable to describe the various surgical approaches to the management of syndactyly in the current study.

- Results: Please provide the numbers of the different types of procedures according to the CPTs and also please mention how many patients received a single or multiple procedures during the same surgery.

Thank you for this comment. We are unable to provide more granular data from SPARCS since laterality and surgical reports are not available in this administrative database. We combined all CPT codes to describe an overall rate of surgical management consistent with the purpose of this study.

- Discussion: It describes the strengths and weaknesses of the study and includes comparison to other studies on the topic. However, the very small percentage (5%) of patients undergoing surgery in NY State is not underlined.

#### **Journal editor-in-chief (associate editor) comments:**

- The two sentences in the abstract and the whole manuscript are contradictory: "In total, 178 patients (5.4%) underwent surgical management--", and "Syndactyly occurs in approximately 7 per 10000 live births, and the majority of patients undergo surgical correction before age two." The correct expression should be: a small number of patients undergo surgical correction. Among the surgical patients, most of the operations were performed before the age of two.

Thank you for this comment. We have made the edits per the Editor-in-Chief's recommendation. Specifically, we have changed the wording of the results in the abstract and discussion sections (please see manuscript).

Thank you for this comment. We have underlined this finding.

Thank you again for your comments and review. We strongly believe that these changes have improved our manuscript and prepared it for publication in your journal. We look forward to seeing our manuscript published in the World Journal of Orthopedics.

Thank you for your time and kind consideration.

Sincerely,

The Authors