



Addressing reviewer comments

You worked really hard to get your manuscript submitted, and thought that once you had submitted all you had to do was wait for your manuscript to be published? No, **there are still several steps** that you need to go through before your manuscript will be published. The first of these is responding to reviewer comments.

Outcome of peer review

You will receive an email which lists comments on your manuscript from at least two reviewers, and the outcome of review of either **Revisions required** or **Resubmit for review**.

You, as the author, must then revise your manuscript according to the reviewer comments, and provide a document that responds to each of the reviewer comments. For **Revisions required**, the Editor will assess your revised manuscript; for **Resubmit for review** your manuscript will go through another round of peer review (and yes you will need to respond to another set of comments).

Dear Author,

Your manuscript "xxxxxxx" submitted to Western Pacific Surveillance and Response has undergone peer review. The manuscript has been accepted subject to revisions.

Please find attached the comments from the peer reviewers. Please take the following actions:

1. Review the manuscript according to the reviewers' comments using the track changes facility in Word.
2. Provide a response to each of the reviewers' comments in a separate Word document.
3. Upload both the revised manuscript and the response to the reviewers' comments.

Please acknowledge receipt of this email and let me know if you have any queries,

Thank you and regards,
Coordinating Editor
wpsar@wpro.who.int

Reviewer A:

General comments: This is a well written manuscript covering an important issues in disaster response. It is relevant and applicable for publication in WPSAR.

1. Was the outbreak investigation described sufficiently (including detection and control measures)? No
Comment on investigation: Most aspects of the investigation were described sufficiently, but there needs to be further explanation on why only some cases were included in the case control study and how these were chosen and more explanation on the laboratory and environmental investigation.
2. Were the limitations of the investigation adequately discussed? Yes
Comment: Limitations were discussed but could be expanded.
3. Were recent and relevant references cited? Yes
Comment: Yes, but could be expanded to include information on other outbreaks in the references.
4. Specific comments: Please see track changes on attached document.

Reviewer comments

Reviewer comments include answers to set questions, and then a list of general comments. Sometimes there will also be a tracked changes version of your manuscript along with comments imbedded in the document.

There are a range of reviewer comments, such as:

- **Clarifying a point** (e.g. Reviewer comment: Should the reference be number 1 or 2?);
- **Providing further results** (e.g. Reviewer comment: Please include 95% confidence intervals and P values for these measures of association);
- **Changes that require redoing the analysis** (e.g. Reviewer comment: please consider refining your case definition to make it more specific and then rerun the analysis);
- **Significant changes to the discussion** (e.g. Reviewer comment: The discussion needs to be rewritten as it contains some irrelevant information and repeats results without interpretation).

How to address the reviewer comments

As you go through **each** of the reviewer comments you need to decide which ones you agree with and which ones you disagree with.

Yes, that's right – you don't have to agree with every reviewer comment and make every suggested change.

Agree with reviewer comments

For the comments you do **agree** with you then need to figure out how you can revise your manuscript to accommodate the comment. Your response to each comment and the changes made to the manuscript need to be described in a separate response file.

Example 1: Agree with reviewer comment

Original text

Water samples were collected from intake tanks and reservoirs of the Municipal water system and households located in three areas.

Reviewer comment

How many samples per tank, reservoir, household? How were these sample sites selected?

Author response (in separate file)

Thank you for the comment. We have clarified the number of samples collected in the Methods section in the last paragraph of Page 3.

Changes to text

A single water sample (500ml) was collected from the three intake tanks and two reservoirs of the Municipal water system. Six water sources connected to the municipal water system was chosen purposively for collection of a single water sample (500 ml) in three villages.

Disagree with reviewer comments

If you **disagree** with a comment then you need to justify why in your response to the comment in the separate response file.

Example 1: Disagree with reviewer comment

Reviewer comment

Comments on introduction: a brief outline of how the water is supplied to the area would be useful so that the reader has a clear image of the supply before reading the rest of the article.

Author response (in separate file)

Thank you for your comment. We feel that as the underlying structure of water supply is unknown at the beginning of most outbreaks providing a schematic in the introduction would be inappropriate. It was through our environmental investigation that we determined the way in which the water was distributed to the residents and we therefore describe it in methods and results.

Changes to text

None required

Response to the Editor

Your response to the Editor should contain **two files**:

1. A tracked changes version of the manuscript showing all your changes made based on the reviewer comments.
2. A separate word document that lists each reviewer comment followed by your response on how each was addressed (see Example 3).

Tip: in your response file always point the Editor to where you have made your changes, e.g. “Please see change in paragraph 4 on page 3” NOT “see revised text”.

Both files can then be emailed to the Editor at wpsar@wpro.who.int.

Next steps

The Editor will review your revised manuscript and responses to the reviewer’s comments and may want you to readdress a comment that has not been addressed sufficiently, address a reviewer comment that you disagreed with and/or have their own additional comments. The Editor might also edit the manuscript at this stage.

Once the Editor is satisfied that all comments have been adequately addressed, the manuscript will go through the publication process which includes copyediting (WHO style, grammar and English checks) and developing the final proof.

You will be asked to review both the comments from the copyeditor and the final proof. Then you can sit back and wait for the manuscript to be published!

Example 3: Example response to reviewer comments

Dear Editor,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to revise our manuscript. We appreciate the comments and suggestions made by the reviewers. Please see our responses to the reviewer's comments below.

Abstract: are these symptoms all inclusive or to be a case does someone only need one of these symptoms? The case definition was diarrhea and any of the following symptoms. Given this we feel that this sentence requires no further revision.

Introduction: Should the reference be reference 1 or 2? Changed to 2.

Introduction: Please be more specific about dates. Were the 60 cases reported for the entire month or before the investigation started? The data compared are total cases reported in November 2013 versus November 2012. We feel that the text is clear but if the editors require further clarification we defer to their judgement.

Methods: What was the method of control selection which led to the case:control ratio of 39/61? Initially we had planned to have a case-control ratio of 1:2. The controls were selected when we had an estimated 30 cases, however, on careful review of the data, we actually had collected information on 39 cases. We wanted to include all the cases in order to maximize the power of the study. We have revised paragraph 2 of the methods as such: "An unmatched case-control study with a planned 1:2 ratio of cases to controls was conducted to test the hypothesis."

Results: It would be more appropriate to compare total attack rates in the villages supplied by the municipal water system versus the rate in those with deep well or spring. We appreciate your point and initially had hoped to analyze attack rates by village and calculate attack rate ratios. However, we are not confident of the stability of the denominator data in the post typhoon setting and cannot be sure that the denominator data we have represents true numbers of residents post typhoon. No changes made.

Recommendations: It would be important to also mention – given that a family had taken up residence near the reservoir – that water supplies should be protected from human contact. Thank you for the comment. We have revised the text in the last paragraph of the discussion: "Also, as part of a disaster response, all water systems should be monitored and fixed where required and should be protected from human contact."

If the cases were indeed from (or mainly from) the villages with Mains Water Supply, then it could be that there was more than one outbreak occurring. Thank you for this comment. We have revised our discussion and added the following to paragraph 5: "As these pathogens were not detected in the water, the investigation cannot rule out that these infections were due to a different source or that there was more than one outbreak occurring."