

2<sup>nd</sup> Revision --

Reviewer Comments:

Reviewer #1: This revision adequately responds to the comments from the previous review. The topic is very interesting and significant, especially when considering the paucity of the literature related to the topic and its clinical implications for nursing care. The concerns on hypotheses, data collection procedures, data analysis methods, results, and discussion points have been addressed. There are three minor concerns that still need to be addressed though.

First, the study design is still not clear in the method section. Probably having a separate section explaining the study design under the method or having 1-2 sentences explicitly explaining the study design under the heading of the method section would help readers follow more easily.

Second, some references tend to be too old (from 1990s) probably because of the lack of the related literature, yet please update the references if possible.

Finally, moving the section on the data collection procedures to after the section on the measurements would flow more logically.

Reviewer #3: The authors have satisfactorily responded to my previous comments. Several minor issues are included.

1. The authors did not use the term "probability" precisely. In many places, the presentation is actually percentages but the authors called them probability. For example, second line under Results section of Abstract, the last line of page 4, page 11 under the Immune Recovery over Time section, Title of Table 3 and Table 4.... The term probability used in Tables 5 and 6 are fine.

2. Sample size determination is not convincing. In primary hypotheses and research questions, I do not see any emphasis on two different groups. If this analysis is based on a previous study, then sample size needs to be addressed as a limitation rather than giving readers a misleading impression that sample size was determined by using the research questions or hypotheses in this study.

3. The authors only pointed out missing values were not included within analysis but did not mention how serious the missing situation is. Does it have any possible impact on power of the test?

4. I would suggest to delete the Greek letter Eta?(SE) in Tables 5, 6 and 7. The reason is those numbers do not make any sense to readers and authors did not interpret them in text. They also make the tables too busy to

read. If you think those numbers are really important for readers to calculate the probabilities, you can include them in appendix. Otherwise, delete them. I will leave this decision to editor and authors.