Author's response to reviews

Title: Maternal and perinatal factors associated with hospitalised infectious mononucleosis in children, adolescents and young adults: record linkage study

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Author's response to reviews:

Dear Editor

We thank the reviewer for her comments and are pleased to accept them all. We have altered the manuscript accordingly, as specified below. Our responses to each comment are capitalized. We will also upload a version showing changes in tracking.

Reviewer's report

Title: Maternal and perinatal factors associated with hospitalised infectious mononucleosis in children, adolescents and young adults: record linkage study
Version: 3 Date: 11 December 2010
Reviewer: Sally Glaser

Reviewer's report:
The authors have worked carefully to address my comments. I feel the paper is improved and is more thorough in the way it treats both the underlying issues at hand and the interpretation of the data. There are still places in the manuscript where it might help to define IM as "hospitalized", e.g., the first sentences of the Methods and the Results.

WE HAVE NOW ADDED THE WORD 'HOSPITALISED' IN THE OPENING SECTIONS OF METHODS AND OF RESULTS.

Also, for the new Table 5, it might be helpful to include statistics regarding the significance of difference for each of the given contrasts.
WE HAVE DONE THIS (SEE TABLE 5) AND ADDED BRIEF TEXTUAL COMMENT ON IT (PAGE 15).

I could envision that the association of IM based on hospitalization with mother's
marital status is essentially sociological, i.e., might reflect the difficulties a single mom might have in getting her child to the hospital, especially for an illness that does not present as life-threatening. Given that the authors choose not to speculate about such possibilities, it seems a little strong for them to recommend that this is an area requiring further research.

WE HAVE COMMENTED ALONG THE LINES SUGGESTED BY THE REFEREE (PAGE 15) AND HAVE NOW OMITTED THE SUGGESTION ABOUT FURTHER RESEARCH.

Along a similar vein, is it possible that the association of IM with lower social class reflects a greater tendency of the less affluent to use hospitalization as a medical resource? This may not be a reasonable explanation for such a finding in the UK, given national health care.

WE HAVE NOW COMMENTED ON THIS, TOO, PAGE 16.

On page 7, there is an incomplete sentence: "None of these excluded babies who had a subsequent record of IM."

WE HAVE NOW CHANGED THIS SENTENCE.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.
Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.