Author's response to reviews

Title: Do Italian women prefer cesarean or vaginal birth? Results from a national survey on mode of delivery preferences.

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Author's response to reviews: see over
To Dr Valerie Smith

Editor BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth

Ref: revised version of MS: 7499370107868970

Dear Dr. Smith

We thank the reviewers for their thoughtful comments and suggestions to improve our manuscript. We are submitting a revised version with the changes marked in red. We also provide point by point answers to the reviewers’ specific comments below.

We hope that our revised manuscript attends the expectations of your journal and we remain at your disposal for any additional clarifications.

Respectfully yours,

Dr. Maria Regina Torloni
Corresponding author

Answers to reviewers:

**Reviewer 1 (Kathrin Stoll)**

We thank dr Stoll for reviewing our manuscript and her detailed comments.

We agree that the topic is mostly relevant to the local context of Italy. However, since CS rates are increasing worldwide and Italy is the country with highest CS rates in Europe, this study provides information of interest to the European context. In addition, this study explored the reasons that led the respondents to prefer either vaginal or cesarean delivery, an aspect that is not extensively assessed by other studies on route of delivery preferences.

**Background**

Line 2: we have eliminated the word “major”, as suggested.

We have added information on maternal request CS in Italy and included an additional reference.

Mazzoni is included in the citations presented in Background (2nd paragraph, 3rd sentence, reference 19).

We have removed the term “population based” and added other aspects of the previous Italian studies.
Methods (Sampling frame, representativeness and 2 phases of the survey):

Most of these respondents of the magazine survey were from the Milan region of Italy. Since there are large regional variations in CS rates in Italy and we wanted to obtain the views of women from all regions of the country, we went on to the 2nd phase of the study, performing phone interviews with women from all other areas of the country, excluding the Milan region.

Data for the 2nd phase of the study were collected using a computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) system, with respondents selected through a geographically stratified random digit dialing approach. The sample size of 750 adult women (age 20-40) was based on geographic area and population size representativeness, excluding the Milan region which had already been represented in the magazine survey. Adult women fluent enough in Italian to hold the interview were considered eligible for inclusion. These details have been added to Methods.

This type of approach, mixing web and telephone surveys, is commonly used in market research (de Leeuw 2005, new reference). Survey response rates are significantly higher for mixed mode surveys than when using either an exclusive telephone or web survey. This has been added to Discussion.

Results:

A total 4 women sent questionnaires via postal mail. This has been added to Results.

The sentence that you mention is correct. In the 4th paragraph of Results, we present the statements with the highest level of agreement for women who preferred to deliver by CS. In the 5th paragraph we present the statements with the highest level of disagreement for women who preferred to deliver by CS. This is presented in Fig 2.

Discussion:

We have added new sentences comparing our findings with the 2 other Italian studies.

As presented on Table 1, 40% of our participants with a previous CS would prefer to have another CS compared to 5.8% of the participants without a previous CS. Similarly, the systematic review on maternal preferences (Mazzoni 2011) reported that women with previous CS are substantially more likely to prefer another CS than multiparas without a previous Cs (30% versus 10%). Thus, if maternal request is one of the factors driving the increase in CS rates worldwide, it would be important to avoid the 1st CS since this would reduce the number of multiparas who would prefer to have a CS. To clarify this last idea, I have modified that sentence in Discussion.

New sentences on the Italian maternity care system and birth culture have been added, along with new references.

The sentence on fear of pain has been modified. We have added other references that support the association between fear of childbirth and preference for CS.
We have added a sentence on potential selection bias in the last paragraph of Discussion.

We have modified the first sentence of Conclusion.

Sorry about the Figure titles, but the journal instructions ask authors to place the titles of the graphs in a separate file.

An English translation of the survey has been added as supplementary material (Supplementary file 2).

Thank you for the reference. It has been added to Discussion.

Reviewer 2 (Christine McCourt).

We thank dr McCourt for her review, comments and suggestions.

Abstract:

Following your suggestion, we have modified the 2nd sentence.

Methods:

We have included additional information on the content of the magazine article that was published along with the survey.

Results:

Most of the 250 women who answered the magazine questionnaire were from the Milan region of Italy. Since there are large regional variations in CS rates in Italy and we wanted to obtain the views of women from all over the country, we went on to the 2nd phase of the study, performing phone interviews with women from all other areas of the country, excluding the Milan region. We have added this information and details on the sampling frame to Methods. In order to obtain a final dataset that was representative of all the geographic regions of Italy, we combined both samples for our analyses. This type of approach, mixing web and telephone surveys, is used commonly in market research (de Leeuw 2005, new reference). Survey response rates are significantly higher for mixed mode surveys than when using either an exclusive telephone or web survey. This has been added to Discussion.