Author's response to reviews

Title: The relationship between low maternal serum vitamin D levels and glycemic control in gestational diabetes mellitus assessed by HbA1c levels

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Dr O'Donovan;

Thank you for considering our work for publishing in your esteemed journal. My colleagues and I were very delighted to receive the distinguished reviewers’ fruitful comments, as well as those of the respectable editorial board.

We made all the necessary changes requested by the reviewers and by the editorial board; we hope they are acceptable, helping our study to be accepted in the BMC Pregnancy & Childbirth Journal.

Following is point to point presentation of our modifications (written in red) in response to the received comments from both the editorial board and the reviewers:

• The formatting has been adjusted according to the instructions on the proposed link and the proper editorial requirements were fulfilled. The revised manuscript conforms to the journal style.

• As concerns the valuable comments of referee number 1, they were as follows:
  a. “Lines 62, 116 & 117: mention neonatal hazards which were not part of the study design and no mention of any work done on neonates in the study.”

    Comments involving neonatal hazards were removed.

  b. “Line 127: A lot of work was done with fasting blood sugar, insulin levels and QUICKI which should be added to the methods accessing glycemic control in the aim of work.”

    Changes were added in compliance to the comment (lines 106 &107).

  c. “Line 152: (in methods) as the body mass index affects glycemic control in patients, the method of its’ calculation was mentioned without actually saying that all patients in the study and control group were (BMI) matched, which later came to be said in the results on line 188.”

    Changes were added in compliance to the comment (lines 142 &143).
• As concerns the valuable comments of referee number 2; they were as follows:
  a. “The units by which Vitamin D was measured (lines 157 &158) in Patients and Methods, need to be revised.”
     The units were revised.
  b. “In Tables 2 and 3 in last columns, the abbreviation (S) and (NS) were used without clarification below the table of their meaning.”
     Abbreviations were added to the abbreviation list (lines 23&24).
  c. “In figure legend: The verb "show" is missing an "s", and "level" should be in plural.”
     Correction was made (line 371).
  d. “In the "Aim of the work" The authors mentioned the relation between vitamin D and glycemic control using HbA1c, the results and discussion included statistical analysis concerning the relation between QUICKI and Vitamin D levels as well, they should have mentioned it in the aim of the work. Adding it will enrich the topic, and will not disregard an effort already paid.”
     Changes were added in compliance to the comment (lines 106&107).

• As concerns the valuable comments of referee number 3, they were as follows:
  a. “The authors present a detailed Introduction. It can be shortened to make it more succinct. Eg. Paragraph on vitamin D absorption/ conversion in the body can be cut short. If required, a brief reference to this can be made in the Discussion.”
     Introduction has been reviewed and shortened.
  b. “Introduction section does not give a strong rationale for their study, or it is not laid out clearly. Add a sentence in the end to categorically state the purpose of doing this study and how does this add to the existing literature.”
     The mentioned section was revised and appropriate changes were made in compliance to the comment (lines 94-98).
  c. “The authors should give more details as to the method of selecting cases and controls. How many women were approached, how many
agreed to participate, what were the eligibility criteria to determine the cases (eg. What test was used to diagnose GDM) need to be given. In page 8, lines 136-137 give the impression that of the 160 women selected, 80 each happened to be GDM and control women, which is not correct. The correct statement would be that 80 GDM women were recruited and 80 controls were selected subsequently. Details on how controls were selected should also be given.”

The designated section was revised and appropriate changes were made in compliance to the comment (lines 114-130).

d. “Mean 25(OH)D levels were similar in Controls and GDM, suggesting no association between GDM and vitamin D status. It is not clear if the analysis (of inverse association between glycaemic indicators and vitamin D3 levels) takes into account both the GDM and the control women. I don’t understand the idea behind recruiting a group of control women too, when the current paper describes associations only in GDM women. Was there a significant difference in the prevalence of vitamin D deficiency between the two groups? The authors can make an effective use of the control group also to see if there was an association within the normal range of glycaemia.”

This section was revised and appropriate changes were made in compliance to the comment. We would like to add here that the mentioned inverse correlation concerns those with GDM. We did not include the results of euglycemic pregnant women so as to keep the study focused on one entity.

e. “The analysis models do not include any confounders such as socio-economic status, seasonality of testing, diet etc. which may have major influence on the study”.

Comment was considered and appropriate changes were made (lines 275-281).

f. ” The authors should discuss the reasons for high prevalence of vitamin deficiency in the region.”
Appropriate changes were made to the manuscript (lines 218-227).
g. "The discussion section should include mechanisms of the observed associations, direction of causality etc. As the vitamin D deficiency was higher in women with poorer metabolic control, the possibility of reverse causality should be discussed."

Appropriate changes were made to the manuscript (lines 235-248).
h. “Background section, line 95, please reference the sentence “Vitamin D deficiency may increase the risk of chronic diseases”.

The sentence was omitted from the text.
i. Please use terms diabetic women or pregnant women etc. instead of diabetics, non-pregnant…..”

Appropriate changes were made in compliance to the comment.
j. “Page 14, lines 257-260, the meaning of this sentence is not clear. Please rephrase.”

The sentence has been rephrased (line 264-269).

• The English language in the text has been reviewed by a professional English reviewer.

• The statistical analysis was made by a professional statistician, the results and tables were however revised for matching with the original copy of statistics.

On behalf of all my colleagues I would like to express my thanks to the editorial board members and the reviewers for their valuable comments and advices. We do hope that these changes will be satisfactory, help the publication of our study.

Thank you sir, please accept my best regards.

Yours sincerely;

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