Author's response to reviews

Title: Growth of a cohort of very low birth weight infants in Johannesburg, South Africa

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Author's response to reviews:

To whom it may concern,

RE: Manuscript revisions

The responses to the second set of reviewers’ comments are addressed point by point below, corresponding with the points in the reviewers’ reports. Changes have been highlighted in the text but not on the figures.

REVIEWER: PETTERI HOVI

Major compulsory revisions:

3. We have included the number of doctors responsible for the Ballard scoring over the study period.

5. The Z score is derived from the WHO reference population and is presented with 95% confidence limits. The figures presented were derived from the WHO anthropometry statistical package and represent the number of standard deviations the sample mean lies above or below the WHO reference population. In addition, we have included the standard Z score calculation. Our understanding is that this is in itself a recognized statistical comparison between the study sample and the WHO population, especially when the 95% confidence limits are taken into consideration. Could the reviewer please give more detail as to what is further required here?

16. Issues around stunting prevalence and how this may contribute to poor catch up growth have been reworded in the text.

The figures have been revised as suggested, including adding the WHO reference population to Z score legends, adjusting the font size and explaining the data points and error bars.

REVIEWER 3:

The lack of detailed information on length of stay and time to regain birth weight as been listed clearly as a limitation of the study in the discussion.
Kind regards,
Cheryl Mackay