Reviewer's report

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

Version: 3 Date: 8 April 2011

Reviewer: Petteri Hovi

Reviewer's report:

Minor Essential Revisions (wrong use of a term)

Point number 16 in my original review

I wrote: “Stunting prevalence as an explanatory factor removed from abstract, that is OK. However, the authors have now added same idea in the first sentence of the 3rd paragraph. I find the idea illogical and I will stick to this opinion irrespective of where in the manuscript it is stated. The point here is that, clearly, the reasons for stunting contribute to the poor catch up. It is the form of writing stunting as an “additional factor contributing to slower catch up growth”, I advice the authors to reconsider.”

Here is the Version 2 sentence from the manuscript (Third paragraph in Discussion):

“The high prevalence of stunting in the South African population4,13,17 may be an additional factor contributing to slower catch up growth in length for age in the study sample.”

And here it is reworded in Version 3:

“The high prevalence of stunting in the South African population4,13,17 may contribute to poor catch up growth in length for age in the study sample.”

In my opinion, stunting cannot be named as a CONTRIBUTING FACTOR to reduced growth rate. Stunting is a word that MEANS reduced growth rate. The current rewording does not help. Instead, perhaps the authors could rise up the issue of stunting by stating something like “Our findings fit well with the known burden of stunting in South Africa 4,3,17.”

Otherwise the corrections are sufficient.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests