Reviewer's report

Title: Duration of exclusive breastfeeding; validity of retrospective assessment

Version: 1 Date: 29 December 2010

Reviewer: Ruowei K Li

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- Minor Essential Revisions

1. It is not clear how and what kind of data were extracted from pregnancy and child health records to define exclusive breastfeeding during hospital stay after birth. Was each feed by nurses or mom during hospital stay documented in the records? If not, moms may not know whether their infants were given any supplements by the nurses. Similarly nurses may not record the supplements given by moms during mother-infant room-in. As such, the reference used in this study might be limited as a gold standard.

2. The disagreement between maternal recall and records found in this study (77.6% vs. 23.9%) is much bigger compared with previous studies. In addition to the methodology difference, the wording of the questions might at least partially explain the discrepancies. In this study, the question was asked as “At what age you discontinued EBF?; whereas in many other studies, the questions was asked as “How old was [child] when s/he was first fed something other than breast milk? This includes formula, juice, cow’s milk, water, sugar water, solid foods or anything else.”. Since very often maternal recall is the only option in the population studies, it may not be feasible to include a calendar event in the questionnaire. I recommend to extend the discussions to include the limitation of this study.

- Discretionary Revisions

1. PHM needs to be defined in the abstract
2. The definition of exclusive breastfeeding duration used in this study needs to be specified in the method section.
3. What are the eligibility of mother-infants pairs for the birth and immunization registers? Since exclusive breastfeeding practices might be significantly different among premature newborns and SBU infants, I would recommend to limit the study population to healthy full term infants only.
4. More details are needed to describe the questionnaire instrument, such as what is the total number of items listed? Is water listed as a separate item?

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
No conflicts of interests