Reviewer’s report

Title: Early eczema and the risk of childhood asthma; a prospective, population-based study

Version: 1 Date: 21 April 2012

Reviewer: Marie-Soleil MSM Masse

Reviewer’s report:

Major Compulsory Revisions
1. Is there a statistically significant difference between eczematous vs. non-eczematous patients according to the percentage of subjects with positive skin tests?

2. Although the authors refer us to an appropriate previous work, the actual skin tests used in the study should be named in the manuscript. At least, it should be specified that both respiratory and food allergens were tested.

3. Authors should have mentioned, in their discussion, that a major limitation of the study is that only 12 different allergens have been tested. Moreover, important allergens known to cause eczema were not included in the panel tested (e.g. wheat, soybean).

4. Concerning the 95% CIs given, there are a lot of them who do not seem to be possible. For instance, 95% CIs for age at delivery seem awkwardly narrow (mean age 29.8, 95% CI 29.6-30.0 vs. 28.9, 95% CI 28.7-29.1). Moreover, some 95% CIs are used inappropriately in the descriptive statistics (for eg the Table 1 and the characteristics of the patient).

Minor Essential Revisions
1. There is a lot of spelling mistakes in your manuscript: I would recommend that someone fluent in English revise your manuscript. Here are some examples:
   a. In the abstract: Results: Association between ever eczema 2 years and current asthma 6 years was aOR=1.80 = this sentence bears no sense.
   b. Four of ten children with current eczema at 6 years had onset of eczema after the age of 2 years, but co-existing of different allergy-related diseases at 6 years were higher among those with debut (the start) of eczema before 2 years of age.
   c. -Study Variables : At the age of 2 years (baseline) parents/children were given questionnaires on environmental exposures and on family history of different allergy related diseases in parents and siblings. In addition, a detailed questionnaire on the child’s health, with emphasize on allergy related diseases, where (were) answered.
   d. -Ethics (Ethics)
   e. ……..
Discretionary Revisions

4. Another limitation is the use of the Immulite 2000 method for dosing allergen-specific IgEs. The standard used in manuscripts for dosing IgEs is, nowadays, ImmunoCAP – Phadia.

5. Finally, some results are displayed in the methods section of the manuscript (in the statistics section of the methods part).

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

Question 1) no
2) no
3) no
4) no
5) no

So, I declare that I have no competing interests