Author's response to reviews

Title: Comparing the growth of preterm infants through the gestational period of 37 to 50 weeks with the reference fetus

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Validating the weight gain of preterm infants between the reference growth curve of the fetus and the term infant

Response to Reviewers
We wish to thank each of the reviewers for their time, expertise, and comments.

Reviewer: Shripada Rao
Reviewer's report:
The authors have updated the manuscript addressing my suggestions. It is suitable for publication.
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.

Reviewer: Pieter Sauer
Reviewer's report:
This is the second version of the manuscript "comparing weight gain of preterm infants ". Although the authors have made changes in the manuscript, they have not responded to major concerns as to the paper indicated after the first submission.
1. it is still unclear to me what the authors want to address with this paper.
Response: Thank you very much for your time and review. We have clarified the objectives and hope that it is clear now.

2. in this paper a comparison is made between weight gain in a cohort of infants, mainly from Calgary with a small group from two other places with growth curves that are not published so far. therefore it is impossible to understand where the cohorts are compared to.
Response: We apologize that you had not yet seen the companion paper on the FIGR development.

3. the authors have not responded to the issue of cross sectional data vs longitudinal data, of importance in relation to the period 27-41 weeks of gestation.
Response: We have added a discussion on limitations imposed by the cross-sectional design of the birth-size studies.

4. the paper is very hard to read and understand.
Response: We have made several editing changes to improve readability.

5. I received 7 figures and only legends for 5 figures.
Response: We apologize for the confusion. We had planned that the first 3 figures were to be grouped together as parts a,b, and c of Figure 1, however the submission process assigned numbers 1-3 to these figures, and then relabeled our figures 2-5 as 4-7. We apologize that this was not clear in the submission, and have renamed them consecutively.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest
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.
Reviewer: David Tudehope

Reviewer's report:

I was satisfied with most of changes made by authors which improved science and readership. However, I would like to make 2 minor suggestions to text but some more substantial suggestions about presentation of figures.

1. Suggestions to improve text
   • Introduction: ps, 4th paragraph, line 1 - add “is” in “since it is often”
     Response: Thank you for your time, expertise, and for these suggestions. This sentence has been omitted during our editing.

2. *Methods: p4 formula for FIGR. Replace # with number in denominator
   Response: Done

3. Figures are difficult to interpret and legends need further clarity. Figures should stand alone and be understandable from description in legend without having to read text
   *Figure 1 – legend has been improved by adding 3rd, 50th and 97th centiles but overall figure is less clear than previous version. I recommend reverting to dot for 23-25 weeks [not 24], dash for 26-28[not 27] and dash-dot for 29-31[not 30] weeks
     Response: Thank you, good suggestion.

3. Figure 2 - once again legend and figure need clarity as for figure 1. The concept of individual weight gain patterns and median weight gain curves is hard enough for reader to comprehend without having to struggle with figure labelling as well.
     Response: Thank you, we have carefully rewritten all of the legends.

4. Figure 3 – legend doesn’t relate to the figure at all.
   Figure 4 – impossible to visualise the 3 different lines on the image I downloaded.
   Figure 5 - ? no legend provided Figure 6 - ? no legend provided
   Figure 7 - presumable the legend described as figure 5 is actually legend for figure 7 .
   As you can see the description of the 5 legends provided for 7 figures caused this reviewer great confusion. Considerable work is required to improve presentation and description of figures.
     Response: We apologize for the confusion. We had planned that the first 3 figures were to be grouped together as parts a,b, and c of Figure 1, however the submission process assigned numbers 1-3 to these figures, and then relabeled our figures 2-5 as 4-7. We apologize that this was not clear in the submission, and have corrected this. We have also separated the final figure into 3 separate figures to improve clarity.

Respectfully submitted,

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