Author’s response to reviews

Title: Feeding and smoking habits as cumulative risk factors for early childhood caries in toddlers, after adjustment for several behavioral determinants: a retrospective study.

Authors:

Alessandra Majorana (majorana@med.unibs.it)
MariaGrazia Cagetti (maria.cagetti@unimi.it)
Elena Bardellini (bardellini@med.unibs.it)
Francesca Amadori (frenciamadori@hotmail.com)
Giulio Conti (studiodentisticoconti@gmail.com)
Laura Strohmenger (laura.strohmenger@unimi.it)
Guglielmo Campus (gcampus@uniss.it)

Version: 4 Date: 21 November 2013

Author's response to reviews: see over
Sassari, November 21st, 2013

MS:  6713637658679874
Title: “Feeding and smoking habits as cumulative risk factor for early childhood caries in toddlers after adjustment for several behavioural determinants: a retrospective study.”

Kind Dr Antoni Noguera-Julian,

Please find enclosed the new version of the manuscript “Feeding and smoking habits as cumulative risk factor for early childhood caries in toddlers after adjustment for several behavioural determinants: a retrospective study”. by Mayorana et al. We really thank the referees for the help to improve our paper.
As required, a point-by-point description of the changes follows:

Reviewer 1

We have really to thank reviewer 1 for the comments that help us to better elucidate better our data.

We did not have a priori decided what the findings will be; when this study was planned the main aim was to evaluate the role of feeding practice in the first six months of life on caries status registered in toddlers aged 24-30 months. Several other background factors were included e.g. smoking habits, fluoride supplementation, SES etc.

Defining the association between infant feeding practices and SES are likely complex. Differing aspects of SES may be associated with knowledge, attitudes, experiences, and beliefs leading a woman to a particular infant feeding choice. Maternal or paternal education may or may not reflect different infant feeding choices. Paternal and maternal income has been shown to affect breastfeeding in opposite directions, perhaps since maternal income is associated with employment, which may detract from breastfeeding. In general, income may influence breastfeeding by being a marker of knowledge and attitudes and because women of higher income may be better able to afford feeding supplies. The ability to afford formula is inversely associated with use of formula.
During data analysis, we assessed for a potential multicollinearity between SES, feeding practice and smoking habits using the procedure DFbeta in STATA, dropping the information that have too much influence on the regression line. Anyway after the data elaboration no statistical significant multicollinearity was observed and so it was decided to report findings with outliers. Anyway, following reviewer’s suggestion the modified completely table 3, that now describes the ordinal logistic regression estimation. Caries severity according to mean housing cost feeding practice and smoking habit. We modified introduction, materials/methods, results and discussion section trying to elucidate our study.

Reviewer2

1) There are still some minor grammatical issues that should be addressed (e.g., role instead of rule, etc.)

   We checked carefully the manuscript regarding the language and the grammatical issue.

2) Many terms are used throughout the abstract, manuscript, and tables to refer to advanced caries lesions (sometimes the term severe is used, sometimes high as in Table 1, etc.). Please be consistent and use only one terminology throughout. I suggest this term get clarified in the abstract as referring to children with cavitated dentinal lesions (as the term advanced or severe could be interpreted in many ways).

   We modified the terminology throughout the manuscript.

3) Abstract-Conclusion-Last sentence: Instead of “affect” I suggest modifying this to “are associated with”.

   Done.

4) Introduction: The explanation provided in the response to the reviewers regarding how it was decided to set the thresholds to classify the responses regarding formula feeding-breastfeeding should be included in the manuscript, as it helps explain what seems like arbitrary and difficult to establish cut offs.
We added this phrase “In the questionnaire was asked to the mothers every six weeks to report for three consecutive meals how many grams of each type of milk was given to the baby. A mean of each milk in the three meals was done and the values were expressed in percentages.

5) Materials and methods: It is unclear how calibration was done. As written it would appear 3 examiners looked at the first 65 children, and then GC was the gold standard examiner. What is the kappa for inter-examiner reliability for the collapsed ICDAS codes (1-3, 4 and 5-6)?

*We apologized for the misunderstanding, the reviewer was right the Kappa value reported are related to the collapsed ICDAS codes (1-3, 4 and 5-6).*

6) Was the excellent response rate to the questionnaire mailings (only 3.56% non-response) after just 1 mailing or were several attempts made?

*In case of non-receipt of the questionnaire, mothers were ring by telephone and mailed on a weekly basis up to three calls; in addition unclear or incomplete answers were clarified through telephone communication.*

7) Results: Although the authors state a significant association was found between ICDAS and sweet beverages (Table 2), the OR was rather low. Sometimes OR are presented in the text and sometimes they are not. I suggest being consistent.

*We agree with reviewer’s comments e we tried to be consistent.*

8) When describing results for Table 4 in the text avoid the term “dummy” variables. In that same paragraph towards the end there is a typographical mistake as the OR is presented as 570.

*We decide to drop table 4 and to rewrite completely table 3.*

Finally, I would like to state that all the authors of the byline approved the manuscript content and that this manuscript is both, not under consideration for publication elsewhere, and free of any conflict of interest or financial implications.

Sincerely,
Guglielmo Campus, DDS, PhD