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.

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Reviewer's report
Title: Feeding and smoking habits as cumulative risk factors for early childhood caries in toddlers, after adjustment for several behavioral determinants: a retrospective study.
Version: 4
Date: 22 December 2013
Reviewer: M Fontana

Reviewer's report:

Minor Essential Revisions:
1) There are still some minor grammatical issues that should be addressed
   The manuscript was double checked by an English native person about grammatical issues

2) Abstract-Result-When referring to “high caries” it should be clarified it is “high caries severity”, as it could be interpreted at “high caries prevalence” if the qualifier is not used.
   We modified as suggested by the reviewer the term.

3) Materials and methods: It is still unclear what the exact kappa is for inter examiner reliability. Please state as it was done for intra-examiner reliability.
   We added a clarification on the Kappa value reported for the intra-examiner reliability.

4) In the discussion the authors state that smoking is probably a proxy for unhealthy diet or oral hygiene practices. They state they did not measure oral hygiene practices, but they did measure diet. It would help the reader, to support their hypothesis, to state whether smoking was indeed related to unhealthy diet in this population.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No smoking N of mothers</th>
<th>During pregnancy N of mothers</th>
<th>Environmental exposure N of mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≤ 1/day</td>
<td>1619</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥ 2/day</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We added a phrase in the results section on this matter.

5) The percentage of mothers receiving prenatal F supplements (of questionable value, as the authors discussed) is relatively high. Is this representative on what happens in Italy, and if so should a recommendation be made to paediatricians to discontinue recommending these supplements?

*Italian National guidelines on caries prevention in childhood were produced by a panel of experts nominated by the Italian Ministry of Health and supervised by the Collaborating Centre of WHO of Milan. The guidelines leave to the paediatrician the choice to administer fluoride using a systemic or topical procedure. Data derived from some companies that produce and sell fluoride supplements to the mass market for toddlers show that only approximately only 5% of children (including infants, toddlers and schoolchildren) used fluoride supplement. Unfortunately these data are quite outdated, they are referred to the late 90’s.*

6) I suggest the conclusion be slightly re-written: Although it is true that the exclusively breastfeeding group had lower caries severity than the other groups, they still developed caries. So the statement “breastfeeding is preventive for caries” seems too optimistic. Maybe this should be turned around to indicate that as breastfeeding gets supplemented with other food sources the risk on increased caries severity increases.

*We followed the reviewer's suggestion.*