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
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.
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.
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.
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 pediatricians to discontinue recommending these supplements?
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.

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:

The only comment I have is that I have funding from the National Institutes of Health in the USA to develop and validate a caries risk tool to be used in medical
pediatric settings. This is a multisite longitudinal study, so I am greatly interested in these interprofessional collaborations.