Author's response to reviews

Title: Catch-up growth up to ten years of age in children born very preterm or with very low birth weight

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Version: 3 Date: 2 June 2005

Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear editor,

Thank you, and the reviewers, for the possibility to revise our manuscript for publication in BMC Pediatrics. We have carefully read and worked on the suggestions made by the reviewers and changed our article accordingly. The reactions on each point stated in the reports are mentioned below.

Yours sincerely,

NBB Knops, MD

Reviewer's report

Title: Catch-up growth up to ten years of age in children born very preterm or with very low birth weight

Version: 1 Date: 5 March 2005

Reviewer: Aimon A Niklasson

Reviewer's report:

General
An important work with important data started already 1983. Even if there is a relatively high drop out frequency, and the infants height at 10 years of age are only reported by the parents, the authors make relevant adaptations and drop out analyses, although some improvements are suggested below. Further follow up during puberty later will increase the importance of this longitudinal study.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

None

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Regarding BMI (Result final part). BMI for all children was... 1 point below Dutch reference values. Explanation of what 1 point is or changing the sentence is suggested.

- Done

Table 1 should be improved by showing clinical characteristics in the drop out group. Hospital days in table 1 (median (or mean))??
Even if it is stated that there is no difference in morbidity between the groups Necrotizing enterocolitits may be more extended in the preterm SGA group. In order to convince neonatologists who treat these severely sick infants (NEC) and see there severely disturbed growth curves after gut resections it is also of great importance to know that the findings regarding SDS are not related to NEC. If not it can be stated in a sentence, but it needs to be calculated.

- A small number of children in our cohort experienced NEC. We did not collect further data on the extent complications of NEC (especially short bowel syndrome) in these children but recognize the effect it could have on further growth. We however do not believe that differences between the subgroups considering the relative small number of children that experienced NEC would alter the final outcome of our study and advice pediatricians interested in this important issue to inform specific literature regarding this subject. Our manuscript has been adjusted stating this matter.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

It would be of some help to give confidence limits for deviating SDS even if the total group is relatively numerous, subgroups are less so. In the discussion if reported values are imprecise I doubt it will be the same for all groups (probably it is better in the group not growing so well) but I also don't think it will change the main result.

- For reasons of clarity in an already abundance of numbers presented we have decided not to change the presentation of the data.

Ref 18 4th author should be spellt Albertsson Wikland (It is misspellt in PUBMED)

- Corrected

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: No
Declaration of competing interests:

Reviewer: joan E hodgman

Reviewer's report:

General
This is an important article on follow-up of VLBW infants. Although the subject has been previously reported, this article contains a large data base draw from an entire country. The methods are appropriate and well described. The conclusions are supported by the data. The article is well written and clear. The discussion includes the important previous information. The abstact is particularly well done.
Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached) I have no major revisions to suggest.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

The second sentence in the second paragraph of the Background is not clear.

- Changed

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

I had some trouble converting the SDS into measurements. I would find actual measurements added to the tables helpful.

- For reasons of clarity of the data presentation we have chosen not to present the actual measurements. Furthermore, the statistical presentation of height in SDS renders the data more accessible for comparison, for example with a population with different characteristics than the tall Dutch but also between children with different mid parental height. For converting the SDS values to the actual measurements we refer to the published data on height in the Dutch population (Frederiks et al; stated in the references).

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions
Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: No
Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.

The third reviewer: Richard W Cooke had no special comments and proposed acceptance without revision