Author's response to reviews

Title: Case-control study of sudden infant death syndrome in Lithuania, 1997-2000

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Answers to the comments of the reviewer Josef Milerad on the article

CASE-CONTROL STUDY OF SUDDEN INFANT DEATH SYNDROME
IN LITHUANIA, 1997-2000

We are very grateful for really valuable comments on the paper. We have agreed with the majority of the remarks and suggestions and have tried to make changes according to them.

Major points
1. SIDS in Lithuania is defined according to Willinger as the sudden death of an infant aged from 7 to 365 days, which remained unexplained after performance of a complete postmortem investigation, including an autopsy, examination of the death scene, and review of the case history (1991). We have included this definition in the chapter “Response cases and controls” according to your advice. Autopsy rate of SIDS infants involved in the study was 100% and all of autopsies felt short to explain the cause of infant’s death.

2. The mean (±SE) age at death in SIDS infants was 114.1±9.6 days and varied from 23 to 235 days. We have included these data in the chapter ”Deaths of sudden infant death syndrome: relation to age, season and time of death”. All of controls were matched with SIDS infants for date of birth within one month. This information is presented in the chapter “Study design and subjects”.

3. As data have been re-analyzed and presented differently according to your and other reviewer advices, case-control design is apparent now. The information about proportions of cases and controls (4 controls for 1 case) is presented in the chapter “Response cases and controls”.

4. The seasonal variation was not taken into account when comparing the clothing of SIDS infants and controls and we agree that it is a weakness of the current analysis. Mattresses were classified as hard (included pallets and twisted plaid), intermediate (included standard infant mattresses) and soft (included pillows). The classification of mattresses is now corrected and presented as standard infant mattresses and substandard infant mattresses, such as pallet, twisted plaid or pillow.

5. The data from univariate analysis related with socioeconomic family status, such as parental age at the birth of an infant, parental education, waged income, housing conditions, self-perceived parental economic situation, have demonstrated it to be
significantly lower in SIDS group than in control. Parity was the part of the questionnaire and this variable has been included into revised univariate analysis.

6. Maternal smoking during pregnancy and paternal smoking during pregnancy both were significant findings in the univariate analysis. Epidemiologically it is difficult to distinguish the effect of active maternal smoking during pregnancy from involuntary tobacco smoking so we have analyzed exposure to smoking according to smoking of partners as some other authors.

7. The variables found to be significant in case-control studies, depend on what is included in a multivariate model. Additional information about all significant and not significant findings has been included in revised univariate analysis.

8. As data have been re-analyzed and presented differently according to your and other reviewer advices, all previously presented figures and tables have been removed. Now Figure 1 and Figure 2 contain information about age at death and seasonal distribution.

9. Discussion has been revised according to your advices. Confusing sentence has been removed from the chapter.

10. References from textbook and Lithuanian journal have been removed.

**Minor points**

As data have been re-analyzed and presented differently, all previously presented figures have been removed.

We are very grateful for the contribution you have made to our paper and hope that we succeeded to improve it till the required level.

Sincerely,

Authors
Answers to the comments of the reviewer Peter S. Blair on the article

CASE-CONTROL STUDY OF SUDDEN INFANT DEATH SYNDROME
IN LITHUANIA, 1997-2000

We are very grateful for really valuable comments which were really useful for improving our article. We have agreed with the majority of the remarks and suggestions and have tried to make changes according to them.

Major points

11. Low mortality rate from SIDS in Lithuania and time provided for study resulted in a retrospective case-control design. As a time lag between the period of the questions related to and the time of the actual questionnaire was for both SIDS cases and controls, we believe the effect of a recall bias was minimal.

12. As SIDS group of 35 cases was small but sufficient enough to yield moderate effects with a power of 0.8-0.9 for general tests, matching had not been taken into account in multivariate model.

13. Low mortality rate from SIDS in Lithuania resulted in a retrospective case-control study. As control infants were matched with SIDS infants for date of birth, control parents were interviewed about child care practices that happened 2-4 years ago. So reference sleep was not assigned for the control group because the time frame was too long and primary analyses focused on routine childcare practices. We completely agree with the remark about a weakness of the current analysis.

14. Data have been re-analyzed and presented differently according to your advice. All previously presented figures and tables have been removed. Now detailed tables of all univariate and multivariate findings are presented. Figures 1 and 2 include new information based on comments of the other reviewer.

Minor points

1. The paper has been re-titled according to your advice.

2. Confusing sentence has been removed from the Background.

3. We are sorry for the misinformation: of the potential 222 control families 40 were not available, 20 refused an interview and 17 were rejected. Wrongly presented values have been changed.
4. As data have been re-analyzed and presented differently, confusing sentence has been removed.

We are very grateful for the contribution you have made to our paper and hope that we succeeded to improve it till the required level.

Sincerely,

Authors