Author's response to reviews

Title: Predictors of the early introduction of solid foods in infants: results of a cohort study

Authors:

Jane A Scott (jane.scott@flinders.edu.au)
Colin W Binns (C.Binns@curtin.edu.au)
Kathleen I Graham (Kathleen.graham@health.gov.au)
Wendy H Oddy (wendyo@ichr.uwa.edu.au)

Version: 2 Date: 17 August 2009

Author's response to reviews:

The Editor BMC Pediatrics

Dear Sir,

Re: Predictors of the early introduction of solid foods in infants: results from a cohort study

Please find attached a revised version of this manuscript. The authors would like to thank the two reviewers for their considered and insightful comments. We have addressed all of the essential revisions and incorporated a majority of the discretionary improvements in this revision.

Reviewer Sara B Fein

Major compulsory revisions

1. We have defined baseline in the abstract as being “before or shortly after discharge from hospital”, which is consistent with how it is described in the methods section.

2. We have stated the direction of association in the abstract.

3. We have clearly stated in the background that the Australian recommendations prior to 2003 and three were the same as the WHO pre-2001 recommendations.

4. We have clarified in the methods section that the sample is not representative of women delivering in private hospitals.

5. We have rephrased this exposure variable to read “whether she had returned to work by 12 months postpartum or earlier”. This variable is used in all analyses as a categorical value and responses were categorised as “return to work before 6 months”, return to work between 6 and 12 months” and the reference category “not working at 12 months”.

Minor essential revisions
1. I am unsure what footnote is being referred to as there is no footnote on page 1, assuming that page 1 is the cover page.
2. correction made
3. correction made
4. correction made
5. correction made, although this now reads “smoking prior to pregnancy” which is the variable used in the analysis
6. Non-participants are now described as those women declining to participate in the study.
7. We have rephrased this sentence as the point that we were trying to make was that infant feeding recommendations should be made in terms of weeks rather than months. This sentence now reads “we recommend that future studies adopt “17 weeks of age” and “26 weeks” as the definition of 4 and 6 months, respectively.”
8. The age labels have been corrected
9. We have changed the heading in Table 3 to read “before 17 weeks”.

Discretionary revisions
1. We have substituted the word Western with industrialised.
2. It should read weight in childhood, as written in the introduction. The study by Wilson et al reported a significant difference in weight and percentage body fat but not in BMI.
3. This sentence as been reworded as suggested.
4. This sentence has been reworded.
5. In the discussion we clearly identify our breastfeeding measures as being feeding method at discharge and at 4 weeks. We also acknowledge the univariate association with feeding method at discharge in the discussion.
6. Similarly, we have acknowledged the univariate association with level of maternal education and that this may be a useful means of identifying women requiring additional assistance in the early post-partum period.
7. This sentence has been reworded and we think si no longer ambiguous.
8. We thank the reviewer for highlighting the peak at 16 weeks and we have used this point to illustrate the value in recommendations being made in discrete weeks and not months.
9. We have identified the fact that the results cannot be generalised to women delivering in private hospitals.
10. The return to work before 12 months is a categorical variable and makes use of the fact that we know if a woman returned to work before 6 months. As explained previously the analysis compares women returning to work before 6 months against the reference category and women returning to work between 6 and 12 months against the reference category.
11. We have chosen to retain the wording of the footnote as this is the wording that was provided by our statistical advisor and is the same as wording used in similar tables in other papers.

Reviewer Daniel Sellen

This reviewer has raised 2 discretionary points for consideration.

1. We are unable to explore the first point as while age and level of education were identified at baseline, information on return to work was collected during the follow-up interviews. While it is plausible that women who returned to work before 12 months were more likely to have dropped out of the study we only know the work status up to the time that they dropped out of the study. We have no way of knowing how long after they were lost to follow-up that they returned to work or if in fact they returned to worked before 12 months.

2. We have performed a chi square analysis to investigate the association between mother’s perception of infant hunger with possible explanatory factors such as younger maternal age or primiparity. We failed to find an association and have incorporated these findings in the results section and discussion.

We trust that we have satisfactorily addressed the issues raised by the reviewers.

Yours sincerely,

Colin W Binns