Reviewer's report

Title: A survey on beliefs and formula-handling practices of parents and child care workers in Palermo, Italy

Version: 2 Date: 15 June 2009

Reviewer: Madeleine Sigman-Grant

Reviewer's report:

- Major Compulsory Revisions

The author must respond to these before a decision on publication can be reached. For example, additional necessary experiments or controls, statistical mistakes, errors in interpretation.

1. OVERALL COMMENT – The authors entitle this paper “A survey on beliefs”. If the questions that appear on Table 2 are accurate, then most of them reflect KNOWLEDGE not beliefs or perceptions. In order for the authors to determine belief, the question would have to read “in your opinion”, or some such phrase. Thus, any mention of belief or perception within the entire manuscript should be changed to knowledge.

2. In the background section, line 12, the authors state that PIF is a suitable and safe breast milk substitute. No formula is a suitable substitute for human milk – they are at best artificial feeds. As to safety, the authors themselves point out the PIF is not totally safe. Perhaps the sentence could be changed to: Infants who are not being breastfeed require appropriately formulated infant nutritional products. Then remove the sentence beginning: A large proportion….. – this is not necessary. Finally, in this same paragraph – insert the frequency of consumption to which this amount refers (e.g. week, month)?

3. In both the discussion and the conclusion, the authors refer to less educated parents more frequently agreeing to the questions – which, in most cases would be the correct answers. Yet, they state that this audience should be targeted because of low education levels. I am confused. Please clarify.

- Minor Essential Revisions

The author can be trusted to make these. For example, missing labels on figures, the wrong use of a term, spelling mistakes.

There are numerous grammatical errors throughout this manuscript. The authors might wish to consider an English editor. Below I have highlighted some (but not all) of the changes needed.

Abstract
Background:
1. In the background section, line 1, insert (PIF) after the first mention of
powdered infant formula.

Methods
1. Change the second sentence to read: Parents were asked to participate in the study……
2. Remove the comment about not being required to seek ethical approval. It is confusing and leads the reader to the wrong conclusion about informed consent/assent – which was obtained.

Results
1. Page 7 4th line: change likely adherent to: likely to adhere
2. Page 7 line 10: change teats to nipples
3. Page 7 line 12: change to (not statistically different) from with no statistically significant difference
4. Page 7 line 15. Delete entire sentence beginning with Additional analysis… Replace with: Additional analysis was conducted to determine the relationship of answering patterns to demographic characteristics of parental and child care worker respondents.
5. Page 7 line 18, change to With-in parents answering patterns to some questions were….
6. Page 8 line 1, change to more persons with 8 years or less of education…..
7. Page 8 line 10, change perceive to know

Discussion
1. Page 9 line 6 change sentence to read: This confirms the need of manufacturers to revise the instructions on labels and give correct advice to PIF handlers. Also, the awareness of pediatricians and other health professionals must be raised regarding potential risks of PIF in order to correctly inform parents and caregivers.
2. Page 9 lines 13 and 15, change evidences to evidence
3. Page 9 last line, change proves to reveals
4. Page 10 line 3, change regular food safety all food handlers are submitted to: regular food safety training given to all food handlers in Italy
5. Page 10 line 7, rewrite sentence: Child care workers more frequently agreed with the recommendation to use water at no less than 70°C to dissolve PIF than did parents.
6. Page 10 line 20, revise sentence to read: Approximately 50% of both groups of respondents agreed with the recommendation…..
7. Page 11, limitation section. Revise to read: Because of the non-probabilistic sampling, generalization of results is limited. Selection criteria of attendance in municipal child care centres skew our sample to a lower socioeconomic group. Self-administration of the questionnaire tended to select more educated parents. Ethnicity of respondents also was significantly slanted toward Italian persons. It is
likely that these issues would deserve closer attention in the future studies on infant feeding in private and public settings.

Conclusions

1. Page 11 line 4 and line 7, move and correct sentences as follows: Improvements should start with the manufacturing process. At present, it is unfeasible to produce sterile PIF; however, the risk of growth of hazardous organisms in prepared PIF can be minimized by adequately instructing caregivers of infants in both the institutional and home settings.

2. Page 11 next sentence could read: Alternative sterile products must be considered for infants at higher susceptibility to infections.

3. Page 11 second line from bottom, change to: and provide scientifically sound information to child care givers.

- Discretionary Revisions

These are recommendations for improvement which the author can choose to ignore. For example clarifications, data that would be useful but not essential.

NONE

Please note that both the comments entered here and answers to the questions below constitute the report, bearing your name that will be forwarded to the authors and published on the site if the article is accepted.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.