Reviewer's report

Title: Economic and other barriers to adopting recommendations to prevent childhood obesity: results of a focus group study with parents

Version: 1 Date: 10 July 2009

Reviewer: Anjali Jain

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major compulsory revisions:

1. Stated within the background section, as currently written there is not sufficient explanation as to why a qualitative study is needed in terms of hypothesis generation. Especially as the authors seemed particularly interested in economic barriers, a quantitative study would have been appropriate with greater ability to test specific hypotheses as well as generalize to larger groups. Qualitative studies in general are to probe more deeply into questions about “why” something is happening, when a quantitative study is not possible, and to generate hypotheses in an open-ended fashion rather than simply categorize responses. It may be useful to provide the script used for the focus groups to get a sense of how structured or open-ended the discussion was so that the findings can be better understood.

2. I am concerned that the transcripts were only read by one reader and thus not appropriately validated. Perhaps that is not the case but it is not explicitly stated in the methods how consensus and prioritization of themes was reached such that the interpretation would be reproducible. For example, just looking at some of the quotes in Table 2, I would not have interpreted the comments in the same way as the authors of the study. The first quote, “Money revolves around it all” could be a very general comment about almost anything unless we know the stem/question the participant was responding to. The details of tone, etc. would also be important about such a comment. The second quote implies that the mother thinks organic or diet foods are considered healthier but may not understand the difference between healthy and unhealthy foods. In the fifth quote, tired and not feeling like cooking are not the same as not having enough time.

In general more details about the qualitative analysis methodology needs to be provided, including the characteristics of the person running the focus groups. Someone who belongs to the community of participants often obtains more meaningful results than a physician investigator, for example.

3. Although the recommendations about which the investigators inquired are common, they are not the standard evidence-based recommendations endorsed by the AAP, etc. How these particular 7 obesity recommendations were chosen should be detailed.
4. The barriers identified are grouped together in the text (though separated in the table) when many of them seem specific to the recommendation being discussed. As the focus group appears to have been fairly structured, it would be helpful to discuss barriers as they pertain to the particular recommendation that provoked the mentioning of the barrier. Afterwards, there could be an analysis of barriers in common among the different recommendations which could be the main messages of the study. This or some other plan of prioritizing the barriers would help the reader to interpret the findings in a more conclusive way.

5. Similarly, the "other" barriers should be more prominently presented in the results section as these may be the true unknowns or the "news" part of the study. Also, the fact that many parents did not mention economic barriers without being asked specifically is interesting and could be an important result of this study.

6. There is insufficient data about the participants in the focus groups. Although we cannot generalize from such a small study, it is important to know as much as we can about who was speaking so that we can see if the results may be important to our own clinical practice.

7. The conclusions are very general and do not seem to follow from the results of the study. Especially considering the small sample size, it is important not to overstate the generalizability and implications of the study.

Discretionary revisions:
1. Introduction/background: the first paragraph is very mild in tone and does not emphasize the importance of the childhood obesity problem

**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.