Reviewer's report

Title: Influence of Socio-Economic Status on Habitual Physical Activity and Screen Time in Children

Version: 2 Date: 8 February 2010

Reviewer: Verity Cleland

Reviewer's report:

The authors have addressed most of my comments and questions adequately, but there remain a few outstanding concerns, detailed below. Can I suggest to the authors that in future when responding to reviewers’ comments they specify where (e.g. page, paragraph, sentence or line) in the manuscript the changes have been made? This makes it much easier for the reviewer to clearly see the changes and ensures that changes are not accidentally missed. It is also helpful to include the reviewer’s original comments in responses to reviews so that reviewers can clearly see the original comment and how the author has responded in one document.

1. Major Compulsory Revisions

Background

1.3 I still feel that my point about the rationale for SB has not been addressed adequately. Although the authors state that ‘It has been suggested that sedentary behavior needs to be considered separately from physical activity’, they don’t say why this is so – a reference to another paper is not adequate. If this is stated clearly in the rationale, the discussion that flows will make more sense. Currently the link between the two is lacking.

1.3 Also, the authors state that they do not wish to include the Ball article in the rationale because of its longitudinal study design – I am not sure that I understand that argument. I am not fusses whether the authors choose to cite this article or not, but my understanding is that longitudinal studies provide a higher level of evidence about associations than cross-sectional studies. Can the authors clarify their argument, or perhaps clarify that in paragraph 2 of the Background that ‘recent CROSS-SECTIONAL studies using objective measurements’.

Methods

1.5 & 1.6 Despite saying that they have included the response rate in both studies, I am unable to find this information. It is important to include the number of children that were invited to participate (not just the number of children that did participate) so that readers (or the authors) can calculate a response rate. The response rate has important implications for the interpretation of results.
Results

2.18 Figure 3: I can see now what the authors are trying to express, but feel it is still a little confusing. I think it is because the significant differences between groups are indicated in different ways (a * for TV and a line for screen time). Also the * is not centred directly above the ‘TV watched per week’ column. Perhaps the authors can think of a clearer way to show this, such as a single * above ‘TV watched per week’ column and another symbol (e.g. ^, ~) above the ‘total screen time per week’ column with a similar footnote?

Discussion

1.9 The authors appropriately argue that there is not sufficient evidence to support either opinion, which therefore highlights the importance of presenting both sides of the argument – currently only one side is acknowledged. I think it is important that the authors acknowledge that an alternative hypothesis exists.

1.12 As per 1.5 and 1.6, I was unable to find information about the number of children invited and the subsequent response rates.

2. Minor Essential Revisions

Abstract

1.2 The authors have added sex as a covariate to the abstract, but state that it made no difference to the results – it is unusual to include in a model a covariate that makes no difference.

Title & throughout

2.1 Screen time is still used in the title and abstract.

Methods

2.10 This has been clarified in the abstract, but not in the manuscript.

Results

2.16 Table 2: It is still not clear why total screen time doesn’t appear in this table.

Discussion

2.21 Page 11, Study 2: In the second sentence the authors have not clarified whether these differences were statistically significant?

2.24 It is not clear where in the text the authors are referring to their further discussion of environmental constraints on physical activity.

2.25 The authors have not clarified in the text whether the Blanc study was in human or animal models.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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