Reviewer's report

Title: The influence of parents and home-life on preschoolers' physical activity behaviours: A qualitative investigation of childcare providers’ perspectives

Version: 1 Date: 19 January 2011

Reviewer: Itziar Hoyos

Reviewer's report:

This study is, in my view, of interest in examining childcare providers’ perspectives of the importance of parents and the home environment for supporting the physical activity behaviours of preschool-aged children. There is an increased attention placed on the childcare setting as an important venue for supporting physical activity participation among children. This study can contribute to that extent by examining childcare providers’ perspectives of parents, home-life facilitators and barriers to physical activity, and suggestions for improving preschooler’ physical activity behaviours. However there are a number of major and minor methodological considerations that require addressing.

- Major Compulsory Revisions:

Introduction section

I think the introduction is too long and I think it should be more specific and better structured. I would suggest summarizing and reorganizing the second, fourth and fifth paragraphs.

In the second paragraph, I would suggest being more accurate. After describing the health benefits of physical activity, I would suggest describing the idea that many Canadian and international preschoolers are not engaging in appropriate amounts of physical activity for health benefits. After that, I would suggest reporting the data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (specific longitudinal data from Canada) and the data from the systematic review of 39 international studies (international data).

In the second paragraph I will also suggest describing early childhood as a key period of interest, because preschool years are potentially important transition periods and critical times for the formation of social skills, specifically learning to interact with others as well as learning to make choices, including those that influence physical activity behaviours.

Regarding the fourth and fifth paragraphs, I would suggest describing more accurately the aim of this research study. This study took place within the context of a larger program of research and the focus of that research was not the home environment, so I would suggest describing the aim more accurately.
I would suggest explaining that this research took place within the context of a larger program of research (References previous work) and the aims of that larger program. After that, I would suggest describing the strong emphasis and increased attention placed on the childcare setting as an important venue for supporting physical activity participation among children, the importance of childcare staff (perceptions and expectations) for caregivers and health professionals given the time children spend in daycare and the pivotal role childcare providers play in shaping preschoolers’ behaviours (parents have previously acknowledged their dependence on childcare staff to ensure their children are sufficiently active). The childcare staff emphasized the influence of parents and the home environment on the physical activity behaviours of preschoolers attending childcare (previous research), however the perspectives of childcare staff with regard to the role of parents and the home environment in increasing children’s physical activity has not been examined (aim of the study).

Methods section

I would suggest describing the recruitment, the participants, the focus groups and after that the data analysis.

Recruitment:
- How many childcare settings were in each organization?
- I would suggest reporting information regarding the first organization (public or not…) as it appeared for the second organization.
- Is there any classification attending the SES levels of the areas where the childcare settings were placed?
- Ethics Committee information as appeared in the manuscript.

Participants
I would suggest describing participants’ characteristics in the methods section after the recruitment explanation. I would suggest using a table to summarize all the participants’ characteristics (in the manuscript Participant Demographics section data).

Focus groups
I would suggest describing covered topics, place where the focus groups were conducted, used methodology, average time of duration…
- Was it a semi-structured format?

Data Analysis
I would suggest describing transcript analysis information (thematic analysis).

Results section
I would suggest describing in an introduction the themes that were developed
from the data. After that I would suggest examining the themes one by one.

I would suggest creating a complementary table for each them with the information regarding the sub-themes and the qualitative evidences (instead of describing the qualitative evidences in the text).

For the first them “Parents and home-environment as facilitators to physical activity” I would suggest these subthemes: role modelling, encouragement by enrolment in activities and supporting activity participation.

For the second them “Parents and home-environment as barriers to physical activity” I would suggest these subthemes: no encouragement of an active lifestyle outside of childcare hours or organized activities, time spent in screen-viewing behaviours and effects of home environments promoting no active activities.

For the third them “Suggestions for improving preschoolers’ physical activity behaviours” I would suggest these subthemes: parents’ awareness and involvement in children’s physical activity (information, workshops…), parental involvement in physical activities with their children and partnership between childcare staff and parents.

Discussion and Conclusion section

I would suggest describing the discussion and conclusion section according to the changes made in previous sections.

I would suggest balancing and supporting adequately the discussion and conclusion sections according to the changes proposed in previous sections. I would also suggest stating clearly the limitations of this research study.

- Minor Essential Revisions

The authors usually refer to home-life and home environment as similar terms. Home environment may include the physical environment (residential, location, facilities, house characteristics …) and socio-cultural variables (family factors, lifestyle habits, rules…). I would suggest being more accurate regarding this terminology throughout all the manuscript.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**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.