Author's response to reviews

Title: Objective assessment of dental fluorosis in an epidemiological setting

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Prof Lalloo

Re: MS: 2073542652631854

Thank you for sending the comments of the two reviewers in relation to the above captioned manuscript.

I have described the changes that we have made to the paper in relation to each reviewer’s comments below:

**Reviewer 1 – Monique van der Veen**

Materials & Methods – we have added details about the standardisation of the photographs as requested. However, a reference is included (17) which provides additional details and descriptions of the process for interested readers. Figures are included demonstrating the field of view and this is drawn to the reader’s attention.

Results – the detailed description of the fluorosis population findings have been removed although a sentence remains explaining that these are pre-screened individuals selected for the study. The bonferroni explanation has been removed.

Abbreviations – NHANES has been added to the list of abbreviations

This reviewer has also made some discretionary suggestions – these aspects (i.e. the calculation of the QLF metrics and a pseudo-colour analysis images) were covered in our earlier technical paper describing the initial technology (Reference 18) and it does not seem appropriate to repeat them here.
Reviewer 2 – Jeroen Kroon

English use – As the paper has been written by four English language speakers as well as extensively reviewed by the CDC proof reading team this was a surprise to us. Indeed, reviewing the changes recommended these seem to be simply style and not necessarily correct or indeed required. We have carefully reviewed the script again and are satisfied that the English language use is appropriate. Style changes have been made where we feel that they help the script. I don’t believe that it is a reviewer’s job to “stylise” the script.

Kappa Scores – reference 29 provides the usual link to Landis & Koch reference for the interpretation of Kappa values and is appropriately referenced in the text. Kappa value interpretation is, of course, arbitrary but we feel that the readership of BMC Public Health will be familiar with them, their strengths and weaknesses.

Tables 5 & 6 – as the reviewer correctly states the gold standard is clearly indicated in the discussion and as per reviewer 1 one’s comments regarding bonferroni – the gold standard is not a result and hence should not be included in this section. Gold standards are clearly provided in the methods and discussion section as well as being clear in the tabulated data.

Figures – it is clearly indicated on our upload and the Figure legends that Figure 4 and Figure 5 are composite figures each comprised of three individual figures.

Thailand study – the section simply states where the subjects were recruited from – so that the reader can understand that these were a previously characterised population – no comment is made on findings from this study and as it is currently unpublished there is no citation to provide.

Editorial Requests

Tables – I am unsure exactly what is being asked here? The tables were produced using the Microsoft Word table tool. We have not used vertical text in the tables nor are there any vertical lines other than those created by the tool. The use of merged cells was undertaken using the Word tool – I am not sure how we could present these data without merged cells? Could you advise? We have placed the title at the top of the tables and the legend below as requested.

I do hope that we have responded to the reviewer’s comments appropriately but if you require anything further, especially in relation to the production of the Tables, do please contact me.

Kindest regards

IAIN A PRETTY