Reviewer's report

Title: Physical Activity and Drinking Behaviour in Preschoolers: Focus Groups with Parents and Teachers

Version: 1 Date: 12 September 2012

Reviewer: Susan B Sisson

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the time invested in the preparation of this manuscript. It includes useful and practical information. The purpose of this manuscript was to qualitatively understand how parents and teacher (collectively, caregivers) think possible and feasible to improve their preschool-aged children’s participation in physical activity and consumption of beverages. This study has many strengths – it was conducted in several European countries with a large number of both parents and teachers. However, there are some major weaknesses that need to be addressed. Namely, this manuscript seems scattered with too much information and not as much depth on any of the presented issues. It is my recommendation that you split this manuscript into two (as appears to be done with the sedentary behavior component of these focus groups). There are several ways this can be done: splitting activity and drinking, splitting results from the focus group and another paper on the differences in practices between countries and finally splitting between results from teachers and results from parents. As currently written there is also a lot of lacking detail and information. Given this is a qualitative study there should be a richness of data that seems to be lost as they are trying to include too much into one paper.

Page 3

Abstract:

Line 1: “advantage” I am not sure it’s an advantage, just a different design for a different purpose. Please rephrase

Line 3: I prefer use of beverage consumption vs drinking behaviors. Please adjust throughout.

Line 4: “focus groups” Are these independent groups? As currently writing, implies that everyone was altogether, which is not what you did.

Line 10: replace executed with conducted

Line 11: I am not sure “questioning route” is the verbiage you want to use. I think question or interview guide or list of questions is more appropriate. Please correct throughout.

Line 11: “questions” About what regarding beverage consumption and physical activity? This is an example of lacking detail that I referred to in to general comments.

Page 5
Introduction:
Line 12: Please insert “such as” between behaviors and in.

Page 6
Line 3: “advantage” To use this word you need a caveat of when it has an advantage. For example, during a formative study or to understand participant perspectives, etc. Clearly it wouldn’t be advantageous all the time.

Line 5: replace executing with conducting

Lines 5-7: sentence beginning with “Furthermore”. Why?

Lines 6-8: Sentence beginning with “For PA” What about these behaviors? How much, why, when, beliefs? Clearly stating this will make your unique contribution clear. As of now, I read this sentence and think “then why do another study if there have already been some done?”

Line 9: remove phrase “the execution of”

Line 11: please add “-aged” following “preschool.

Line 11: Also, please provide some context so readers can fully understand. Do all kids go to preschool? Is this day care? If not all kids go, please give the volume of kids in these countries or Europe that do go. This will be emphasizing the value of the teacher’s influence.

Lines 14-16: Comment about no other qualitative work in this topic. Please refer to the work of Kristin Copeland as she has published several qualitative studies on these issues.

Page 7:

Methods.

Lines 17-19: Please address this nomenclature issue. Are these also day care centers? Are those different? Is preschool compulsory? I alluded to these comments earlier as well.

Page 8:

Line 13: “parents” So these would only be parents of children attending preschool? If there are kids who do not go to preschool and/or child care, those parents might be inherently different. This distinction needs to be clear.

Page 9:

Line 6: please replace route with protocol or something else.

Page 10:

Line 15: Only one researcher? What about consensus of multiple coders and triangulation. This should be included as a limitation. Even though 2 people summarized, the emergence of themes and associated quotes should have included more than 1 person, especially since there were different people for each country, which can introduce bias and error if the different single coders had different background, cultures, beliefs, etc.

Page 12:
Line 9: “sufficiently active” Did they happened to say what was sufficiently active to them? Not a major issue, just interesting.

Line 11-13: Sentence beginning with “A medical” This is confusing to me. Is the doctor encouraging the kids or the parents to encourage the kids?

Lines 12-14: Sentence beginning with “Some parents” This too is confusing. They cannot be more active than they already are? What do you mean by resting? I would encourage the use of quotes throughout the text to support your conclusions and statements.

Lines 14-17: Sentence beginning with “The parents reported” Is this things they already do or could do if they wanted their kids to be more active?

Line 18: “facilitators” Of What?

Page 13

Lines 5-10: Was this a question or a probe? So all other countries, besides Bulgaria, “volunteered” that information without prompt but the Bulgarians didn’t?

Line 12: Preschoolers have that volume of physical education?

Line 13: “during spring and summer” it’s not clear what you are emphasizing here that kids are more active when not in school. Are they not in preschool in spring or summer? Or are you emphasizing a seasonal effect?

Page 14:

Line 1: Did teachers comments if kids are sufficiently active or not? Interesting contrast to report. These discrepancies between parents and providers are also reflected in Copeland’s work.

Line 7: “it is difficult to use other spaces” Do you mean they can only use their class, or do not want to use their class for activity, or have no other place to go?

Page 16:

Line 17: “on top of water and milk” I am not sure what that means. In addition to?

Line 17: “tea” sweet or unsweet?

Lines 13-22: What is being consumed does not seem like adequate use of a focus group. These data could easily have been collected by survey. Please explain. What is more helpful and necessary from a focus group is the richness and context – how, why, and your study purpose, how to change behaviors.

Page 17: Line 4: “main role models” What do the teachers drink? Are they allowed to different less healthful beverages than the kids?

Line 10: Why are “organic” and “unsweetened” in parentheses?

Page 18:

Line 17: please insert “respectively” between “preschool” and “according”. Parents did not address the child care and neither did teachers address the home. However, earlier you did mention that teachers thought kids were inactive at home. Please address this discrepancy.

Page 19:
Lines 2-4: it seems like this background on the prevalence in inactivity and SSB consumption should be in the introduction to frame the health problem.

Lines 12-15: Is tracking the behavior how to increase awareness? Tracking alone will not do anything without understanding and interpretation of these values and what the goals should be.

Page 21:

Lines 14-15: Sentence beginning with “On the other hand” Did this come from your focus groups? If not, where is this coming from or is it your speculation?

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'