Author's response to reviews

Title: Social equity in Human Papillomavirus vaccination: A natural experiment in Calgary Canada

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Social equity in Human Papillomavirus vaccination: A natural experiment in Calgary Canada Richard Musto, Jodi E. Siever, Cyne Johnston, Judy Seidel, Sarah Rose and Deborah A. McNeil

Thank you for consideration of our manuscript for publication in your journal. We have reviewed the above manuscript according to your reviewer’s comments and have made the following responses and changes to the manuscript.

Reviewer 1: Loretta Brabin
Reviewer’s report and responses:
1. I would have liked a descriptive table that provided a clearer description of the SES differences between school types. I struggled with Table 1. Changes to Table 1 have been made within the text. These changes have hopefully made it more understandable.

2. I would have liked to know the total numbers in Grades 5 and Grade 9. These numbers have been added in the text.

3. Grade was used as a proxy for age, when ages would surely have been easy to obtain and likely to have been an important discriminator?
We had previously considered including age as opposed to grade in the analysis. However, since there are only 2 grades of students being included, the distribution of age is bimodal (2 peaks), requiring it to be dichotomized into two groups. These two groups reduce down to age ranges that correspond with the student’s grade so we determined it would simply the analysis to use grade as a proxy for age.

4. Did the analysis look at the number of siblings from the same family and was it similar in Catholic/public schools?
This variable was not available in the Public Health Database that was used for the completion of this study.

5. Another factor that could have influenced vaccine uptake is information provided to parents. There is no mention of whether any standardised information was sent to all parents, the possible effect on students of having school nurses provide additional information (If the authors felt this to be relevant).
All parents in the province received standardized information on the HPV vaccine, regardless of the vaccine delivery system. Parents in the “Community” vaccine delivery system also received a letter indicating where they could receive their vaccinations. Text in the paper has been edited to clarify this.
6. The results section in the abstract does not fully capture the salient points referred to in the discussion and should be revised. We have edited the abstract’s “results” section to emphasize the study’s findings.

7. The title of the paper is not informative and referring to the study as “a natural experiment” is not a suitable description. A variety of internal and external reviewers who provided feedback on draft versions of this paper recommended emphasizing the nature of the “natural experiment” nature of this work. As this is a study in which the levels of exposure to the vaccine delivery system were beyond the control of the experimenters, and that we are examining the impact that this vaccine delivery system had on vaccination rates among various groups of differing SES, we feel that it is a suitable description. However, we would be willing to adapt the title if the editor deems it to be inappropriate.

Reviewer 2: Per-Olof Ostergren
Reviewer’s report and responses:
1. If the space can allow so, it would be valuable to also include the table with the specific results of the logistic regression analyses. We would prefer to include the regression coefficients for the multivariable model in an appendix, rather than an additional table in the text due to the complexity of the model and the fear that it might deter unfamiliar readers (policy and decision-makers) from reading the paper. Ideally, this appendix would be available as a pdf supplement that would be easily accessible for those who wish to see the model output.

Additional changes requested by editorial staff and our responses:
1. Kindly re-allocate the 'Authors Contributions' after the 'Competing Interest' section. Completed in text.

2. Kindly re-allocate the 'Acknowledgment' after the 'Authors Contributions’ section. Completed in text.

3. ABSTRACT: Please change the title 'Interpretation' to 'Conclusion'. Completed in text.

4. Please change the title 'Introduction' to 'Background'. Completed in text.

5. Competing interests placed after the Conclusions/Abbreviations.: Completed in text.

6. Please place the Tables after the References. Completed in text.

7. Additional files: All additional files must be mentioned in the text in numerical order, or removed from the system. Please ensure all files are referred to as additional files (not, for example, supplementary data). Please add a section titled "Additional files" at
the end of the manuscript (after the tables) listing the following for each file: the title of the data, and a short description of the data.
Completed in text.