Title: Physical activity, screen time and obesity status in a nationally representative sample of Maltese youth with international comparisons

Authors:

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Author’s response to reviews: see over
13th May, 2014

Dear Dr. Clemes,

We would like to thank you for the reviews of our paper Physical activity, screen viewing and obesity status in a nationally representative sample of Maltese youth with international comparisons. In light of the comments we have amended the paper and highlighted the changed sections in yellow. Please find a point by point response to the reviews below.

Sincerely

Andrew Decelis
o.b.o co-authors Prof. Russell Jago & Prof. Kenneth Fox

(Reviewer: Dr. Rezende.)

Major Compulsory Revisions:

Abstract:
- The rationale presented in the abstract is not the same as the one in the introduction. I suggest that authors include the one presented in the introduction in the abstract.

We have amended the abstract to include the issues of a) inconclusive evidence about the association between PA and obesity, and 2) self-reported data (Line numbers 25-28).

Introduction:
- The 2nd paragraph is still confuse and presents different concepts and ideas together. Please review this paragraph.

We have reorganised the second paragraph to present concepts in a more orderly manner (Line numbers 64-79).

Methods:
- I still do not think that the comparison of physical activity and screen-viewing levels between countries is an original contribution of the paper. However, if the authors fell this a very valuable part of the results, even though it was not an objective systematically review the literature, a more reliable and transparent description of the search strategy (descriptors, search date, database), selection, eligibility criteria and data extraction should be described in the methods section.

The paragraph presented in the methods (Line 140-142) is too lack of understanding of how review was performed.
We have updated the description of the literature search to include the information suggested (Line numbers 143-149).

Results:
- Line 104 – the response rate presented by the authors (80%) is not based on the number of children that provided completed data (n=811), according to the abstract. I suggest the author to include the response rate based on the sample that complete data (811/1126 = 72%). Additionally, the authors could present the response based on the weekend activities (772/1126 = 69%) once those data presented a lower %.

We have added these percentages in the first paragraph of the results section (Line numbers167-170).

- Line 165 – please explain how significantly higher socioeconomic status score affect the estimates presented in the study.

We have added a limitation related to socioeconomic status (Line numbers 329-331).

Discussion:
- Line 239 – the phrase “As concluded in a recent review by Wilk ….” Present arguments contradictory than the 2nd paragraph. I suggest to remove or reformulate this phrase.

We have marked ‘all’ in bold in the last line of the paragraph to stress that physical activity may not be the major contributor to obesity in all children and then added a clarification that it’s when categorising data into BMI categories that differences emerge (Line numbers 250-252).

Minor Essential Revisions:
- Double check the sample size in the abstract (n=1124);

We corrected this mistake (Line numbers 32).

- Line 71 – the phrase is not connected with the idea presented in the paragraph.

We have removed this sentence as it is explained better in the following paragraph when we stated that data on lifestyle factors and their association with obesity is limited (Line numbers 82-84).

- Line 77 change “incidence” by “prevalence”.

‘Incidence’ has been changed to ‘prevalence (Line 79).
- Line 83 and 84 – physical activity and sedentary time are not rates (“A measure of the frequency of occurrence of a phenomenon. In epidemiology, demography, and vital statistics, a rate is an expression of the frequency with which an event occurs in a defined population in a specified period of time” – Last Dictionary). A suggest to change by “physical activity level” and “high sedentary time”

‘Rates of physical activity’ has been change to ‘physical activity levels’, and ‘high rates of sedentary time, screen time and obesity’ to ‘high sedentary time, screen time and levels of obesity’ (Line numbers 86-87).

- Line 87 – When the author uses “In this study” seems that is still referent to the pilot study presented in the paragraph before. I suggest including “In the present study, we systematically ..”

We replaced ‘this study’ with ‘the present study’ (Line 90).

- Line 399 and 435– the reference is duplicate. Please review it and not complete information’s.
Reference in line 435 has been removed.