Author's response to reviews

Title: Feasibility and costs of water fluoridation in remote Australian Aboriginal communities

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Response to Reviewer’s comments

Now that these recommendations (or most of them) have been implemented are the plants now functioning satisfactorily?

The following text has been added to the discussion:

‘In response to the submission of this study to the Northern Territory government, the Minister for Health clarified the policy and funding responsibilities within and between governments for this type of public health intervention, including systems of management and accountability. The Cabinet of the Northern Territory Government determines the wider implementation of fluoridated water supplies for remote communities. The DHCS is responsible for the development of the fluoridation policy and the Department of Planning and Infrastructure and PWC are responsible for the funding and ongoing operational management of the plants [32]. The Minister committed to the implementation of the structural modifications recommended in the study and the establishment of an enhanced management process. At the completion of a further 12 month review and subject to a satisfactory outcome, the wider implementation of fluoridated water supplies will be considered [32].’

The conclusion to the paper in both the abstract and main text has been made more tentative to bring the paper in line with the plan by the Government to review the operation of the plants after a further year of operation.

Abstract:

‘Water fluoridation units should be considered as a potential priority component of health related infrastructure in at least the larger remote Indigenous communities which have inadequate levels of natural fluoride and high levels of dental caries.’

Conclusion:

‘Australian governments should consider the implementation of water fluoridation units as a potential priority component of health related infrastructure in remote Indigenous communities which have inadequate levels of natural fluoride, high levels of dental caries and larger population numbers.’

The authors argue that this paper warrants publication on the basis that it presents an approach to the assessment of feasibility as well as describing the challenges facing authorities responsible for policy and operational aspects of water fluoridation.

The focus on feasibility and operational issues represents a neglected area of public health research, and should provide useful information for many organisations around the world facing similar challenges of improving the oral health status of disadvantaged people living in small and remote communities.
More specifically it provides previously poorly documented insights into the sort of
issues that need to be addressed in planning for and implementing fluoridation plants in
small remote community environments and in assessing the operational effectiveness of
these plants.

The letter from the Minister for Health in the Northern Territory has been attached to this
email for the information of the editors.

Reference list contains 30 references but on page 3 paragraph 2 the authors cite reference
number 34.

The reference list has been updated and revised. The paper now contains 32 references.

Provide both numerators and denominators for the many %s presented in Table 1.

Table 1 contains all frequencies, numerator and denominator data.

State the size of populations x and y and the dmft/DMFT values of x and y (if available)

The following text has been added to the background:

Community X has a population of approximately 2,000 and the inhabitants of community
Y number approximately 1,300. In community X, six year old dmft is 5.4 and 12 year old
DMFT is 2.6. Community Y has a six year old dmft of 2.4 and 12 year old DMFT of 2.6.

Present costs in US$ or Euros

All cost information is presented in US dollars in the text.