Author's response to reviews

Title: Gatekeepers of health: a qualitative assessment of child care centre staff's perspectives, practices and challenges to enteric illness prevention and management in child care centres

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Author's response to reviews: see over
March 7, 2008

Dear Dr. da-Silva:

Attached please find a revised copy of the manuscript entitled, Gatekeepers of health: A qualitative assessment of child care centre staff’s perspectives, practices and challenges to enteric illness prevention and management in child care centres.

We appreciate the time the Editorial Board spent in selecting a varied and experienced group of reviewers and also the time the reviewers spent reading and commenting on the manuscript. A number of their suggestions have been incorporated in this revised version. As requested a point-by-point response to each of the reviewers comments is included below. We remain certain that this paper is appropriate for publication in BMC-Public Health.

All of the authors have reviewed and approved this revised manuscript and agree to publication. Permission to acknowledge contributors have been obtained. Correspondence regarding this submission should continue to be made to the corresponding author, Ms. Marsha Taylor.

Once again, we appreciate your consideration of the manuscript for publication

Sincerely,

Ms. Marsha Taylor
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Reviewer 1 (EG)

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The objective related to identifying gaps between public health recommendations and actions taken has been modified based on the review of the manuscript. The objective now states that it is to understand how staff of CCCs use current guidance provided by public health officials. It was the original goal to be able to have direct comparisons but the data of this study more accurately demonstrated how the guidance was used.

2. Through revisions the “knowledge” that was assessed has been emphasized to ensure clarity as it related to:
   1. The knowledge staff have of enteric illness in the children they work with.
   2. Staff’s knowledge of definitions for diarrhea and outbreak.

The authors feel that the descriptions provided by the staff in the quotes throughout the manuscript highlight the intimate knowledge staff had of the children-their symptoms and potential causes of enteric illness and how they used this knowledge to determine when to take actions and what actions to take. We also feel that the results highlighted a lack of consistent knowledge related to the definitions of diarrhea and outbreak. Through further revisions and editing this has been strengthened and clarified in the results.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Substantial editing by all the authors has been completed.
2. A statement regarding whether this type of study has been done before and how this work compares to other related work has been included in the discussion. (Pg. 21, line 1)
3. Further description of the types of centres represented in the study has been added to the Results. (Pg. 7, line 19). This description has been made general for the purposes of confidentiality; further, more detailed descriptions could jeopardize this.
4. This section has been removed. The authors agreed with the reviewer’s comments that this section was difficult to understand and was not necessary to the manuscript.
5. Further details regarding the types and standardization of the forms have been included. (Pg. 9, line 15 and 17). The reviewer’s last statement related to “easily report” has been clarified through editing.
6. The phrase “diagnostic approach” and surrounding section has been edited to better reflect the content within the results section, emphasizing the need for flexibility to respond. The quote that followed was removed.
7. The section on record keeping has been modified to ensure greater clarity and address the reviewers concerns. (Pg. 16, line 7)
8. The manuscript has been strengthened to demonstrate the need staff had for consistent guidance. Specifically a section in the Results has been added (Pg. 12, line 22). Further editing of the manuscript has clarified this as a finding from this research which supports the recommendation for consistent guidance, specifically definitions.

Discretionary Revisions

1. The suggestion to clarify the composition of the groups has been incorporated. (Pg. 5, line 14)
2. The suggestion has been incorporated and the section on focus groups is now included in the background. (Pg. 5, line 1)
3. The line alluding to original design to include parent focus groups was removed from the manuscript.
4. How these finding apply to an international readership has not been stated specifically, on Pg. 25, line 5 the manuscript states that the findings would likely be applicable in other jurisdictions.
both across Canada and internationally. Although regulations will vary, the improved understanding of the issues and recommendations highlighted could be of use to international readership.

Reviewer 2 (CG)

Major Compulsory Revisions
1. There are very few recent references related to enteric outbreaks in child care centres and those that are most recent and relevant have been included. Reference [11] is based on a recent enteric outbreak and is currently in press. Based on revisions, recent references related to infection control and hygiene compliance have been included in the manuscript.

Minor Essential Revisions
1. Information on the number of regulated centres in Ontario has now been included (Pg. 3, line 10). The number of unregulated centres is unknown.
2. Comments related to how regulations are issued and information is shared has been included (Pg. 4, paragraph starting line 6)
3. Objectives have been revised and editing suggestion is no longer relevant
4. Editing suggestion has been incorporated and the information removed.
5. Section on use of focus groups has been moved to the background to complement introduction information related to qualitative methods (Pg. 5, line 1)
6. Editing suggested has been incorporated. (Pg. 6, line 24)
7. Suggestion was considered during editing. (Pg. 6, line 12)
8. Description of NVivo has been incorporated (Pg. 7, line 8)
9. Suggestion was considered during editing of this section. (Pg. 8, line 25)
10. Editing suggested has been incorporated. (Pg. 12, line 20)
11. The concentration of bleach used by the centres was not a question specifically addressed during the focus groups. Practices by centre or jurisdiction may vary.

Reviewer 3 (RW)

Major Compulsory Revisions
1. Substantial editing has been done by all the authors to address concerns related to grammar and flow of arguments, including clarification of the study objectives. Supporting references has been provided for the statement related to consultation improving implementation of programs and resources (Pg. 4, line 19). Additionally, the discussion has been revised to remove repetition and include further interpretation related to public health and infection control.
2. Methods have been revised to ensure greater specificity and improve understanding which should address the reviewer’s concerns that they were imprecise. Information related to the use of focus groups has been moved to the Background. (Pg. 5, line 1). The first paragraph of the results has remained as part of the results as it does not describe a method used as part of the study protocol but is a description of the study participants.
3. The second paragraph in the results has been removed, the authors agree with the reviewer that it was unclear and not necessary in the manuscript. The quote on page 13 has been removed and the text related to experience has been improved to capture the content of the quote (Page 13, paragraph starting line 21). As suggested by other reviewers the concept of diagnosis has been removed and the section has focussed more on the concept of flexibility for response. Theme labels have remained as presented in the original manuscript, except for removing
“diagnose”. The authors feel that the labels reflect the content of the themes in an interesting and appropriate fashion.

4. The reviewers comment is unclear as to what background needs to be summarized and what detail is required. The authors have addressed issues related to clarity of arguments and specificity to support the findings related to flexibility of guidance throughout the manuscript.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Acronym NDM has been removed due to editing.

Reviewer 4 (PH)

No revisions were suggested by Reviewer 4, the authors thank him for his time and positive review.