Author's response to reviews

Title: Determinants of infant growth in Eastern Uganda: a community-based cross-sectional study

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Author's response to reviews: see over
To
The Editor
BMC Public Health

Bergen, Norway, December 5th 2008

Dear Editor,

Re: Re-submission of manuscript: “Determinants of infant growth in Eastern Uganda: a community-based cross-sectional study”

We are pleased to re-submit a version with minor and discretionary changes to the version dated October 13th 2008 of our manuscript by Ingunn Marie S Engebretsen, Thorkild Tylleskär, Henry Wamani, Charles Karamagi and James Tumwine entitled “Determinants of infant growth in Eastern Uganda: a community-based cross-sectional study” for possible publication in the BMC Public Health. This manuscript is not being and will not be published elsewhere while under your consideration.

We are pleased with the comments from the reviewer and have made changes accordingly. We addressed all concerns in an answer pasted in below, our answers are written in italic. A version with track changes of the manuscript and tables is therefore added.

We acknowledge the reviewer’s (Yves Martin-Prevel) substantial input to this manuscript and we are also very pleased with the conclusion the editorial team wrote in the e-mail sent November 11th 2008. We have done our best to address all concerns as far as the journal’s preferences are concerned. Please let me know if there are still issues which we could solve. There are no changes to the number of tables and figures: we remain with 5 tables and 3 figures.

Yours sincerely,

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Reviewer's report
Title: Determinants of infant growth in Eastern Uganda: a community-based cross-sectional study
Version: 3 Date: 28 October 2008
Reviewer: Yves Martin-Prevel
Reviewer's report:

Review of the re-submitted BMC manuscript entitled:

“Determinants of infant growth in Eastern Uganda: a community-based cross-sectional study”

The authors have to be congratulated for their huge efforts in revising analyses and the writing of their paper. The article now reads very clear and much more convincing that earlier versions. I have only a few minor points to raise.

Major compulsory revisions

None

Minor compulsory revisions

1. The construction of a household wealth index through a PCA is now well explained. However, the choice of categorization that the authors made (top quintile / 2 mid quintiles / 2 low quintiles) sounds a bit awkward. Usually, to split the sample into three categories one used rather the tertiles. It would be worth indicating why another choice was made. This might be due to a particular shape of the distribution, for example.

   Explanation for the categorization is now added in the method section (p6).

Discretionary revisions

2. Abstract: for clarity, at the end of the result section of the abstract, it could be worth adding units (Z_scores) after the figures 0.58 and 0.20

   Done.

3. In the previous review I had pointed out that, in the abstract, the wording "associated to linear growth" was not clear enough. This was because the corresponding sentence referred to one of the main results of the study and therefore, in the abstract, the reader needed to know how the study reached this result (through comparison of rates of stunting or through comparison of mean LAZ). Consequently, the authors replaced the term 'linear growth' with 'length/height-for-age' throughout the manuscript. However the term 'linear growth' is totally understandable and even better suited when general facts are dealt with, as for example in the introduction (e.g. first line of the second paragraph of the background section).
Change is made where indicated in introduction. “Length/height-for-age” kept in 2 other places in the text in relation to methods or results.

4. Page 7: references to figures and tables should be given in the results section, not in the methods section.

References to figures and tables in the result section are kept and the additional references in the methods section are deleted.

5. End of the methods section: The authors said: “Village number (113) was set as the sampling unit using the ‘svyset’ command in Stata”. This is correct and sound. However, the authors could state more explicitly that this is a means for taking into account the intra-cluster correlation due to the sampling design. The sentence could be “The cluster effect arising from the sample design was accounted for by setting the village number as the sampling unit using the ‘svyset’ command in Stata”.

Done.

6. Table 1: the title is a bit long; something like “Mean anthropometric indices and comparison according to sex” seems to give the whole necessary information if you add a footnote to specify that the t-test was performed to compare values of boys and girls. The rest of the information is already self-understandable from titles of the columns and rows.

Done.

7. The same remark applies to the titles of other tables. The title should be more concise and additional information, when necessary, should be given in footnotes.

Done. All titles in the five tables are written shorter and more explicit. Information is added to footnotes when necessary.

8. Discussion: one or two references could be given when the authors evoke possible reverse causality, as it’s a well described phenomenon in the literature.

Done. Reference 26 and 27 discuss reverse causality with respect to infant feeding studies.

9. Conclusion: instead of referring to “mothers” as the targets for educational programmes, the authors may refer to “pregnant women” since early feeding practices are at stake and it has been proven that counseling during pregnancy is more efficacious in this case.

Done.

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

Thank you for the constructive feedback!