Author's response to reviews

Title: Behavioural development of school-aged children who live around a multi-metal sulphide mine in Guangdong province, China: a cross-sectional study

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor,

A point-by-point response to the concerns is provided as following:

**Point-by-point response for suggestions given by Michael Sawyer:**

Major revisions:

1. I have mentioned in last cover letter that due to the limited financial support and human resource, our study aimed to survey the pollution condition and children’s health status, and then estimated their preliminary relationship in the study area. More comprehensive information about potential confounders would be obtained by further study. Most factors judged as “confounders” estimated by other current epidemiology surveys should be tested by further detailed study. This is a step-by-step process.

2. Various biological materials such as hair, human milk, blood, urine and nails have been used to assess trace element level in the human body. The results of this various biological materials could reflect the concentration of heavy mental from different aspects. Some researchers pointed that human hair provides very poor quality information about trace element. I must explain that the main reason for this “poor quality” is caused by hair wash procedure. However, the hair wash procedure in our study was carried out according to the standard method which had been used in other surveys (see reference 11-13 in manuscript). If the hair really provides poor quality information, the reviewer should give some published research articles to support his suggestion.

Minor revisions:

1. Up to now, the Child Behaviour Checklist 2001 have no Chinese version. The checklist (1991 version) had been validated in Chinese so we used the 1991 version in our study.

2. The focus of the Checklist had been modified according to the revision suggestions.

3. On page 5, the sentence “Internalizing problems reflect internal distress and Externalizing problems reflect conflicts with other people.” had been deleted.

4. On page 3, the statement “The deleterious effects on children from the low-level, long-term exposure to heavy metals, especially lead, are well known” and the next sentence “Behavioural disturbances, impaired mental development, and decrements in cognitive function are typical sub-clinical sign of intoxication in children” had the same supporting evidences (reference [4-7]).

5. On page 10, a study limitation paragraph was added. Some unavoidable limitations were addressed in this paragraph.

**Point-by-point response for suggestions given by Pam Factor-Litvakr:**

a. On page 10, a study limitation paragraph was added.

b. On page 9, the statement “The association appears to show no difference between girls and boys, which is consistent with the findings obtained by Cigarillo et al [21] and Ballinger et al [22]” was deleted because it had no adequate evident to draw this conclusion in our study.

Best wishes,

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