Author's response to reviews

Title: Measuring nasal bacterial load and its association with otitis media

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Author's response to reviews:

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for considering our manuscript for publication in your journal. The reviewers' comments have been addressed as described below:

Reviewer 1.

The manuscript has been revised substantially. We believe that the purpose and results of the study are now expressed clearly in the relevant sections and that the paper is understandable to the reader.

Reviewer 2.

1. We have retained the term "Suppurative OM" as this more accurately describes the ear state of the subgroup. Few in this group were diagnosed with AOM, whereas the majority had chronic suppurative OM. This is now explained in the text: Page 8, lines 1-4.
2. The title and aim of the study have been changed and now state, "otitis media" rather than, "tympanic membrane perforation".
3. The statement regarding risk of severe ear disease has been reworded in the abstract conclusion.
4. The statement,"The conductive hearing loss associated with TM perforation has implications for language development and educational outcomes", has now been removed.
5. The distribution of the various types of suppurative OM is now described on Page 8, lines 1-4.
6. Study limitations are now described in Materials and Methods, page 7, lines 1-4.
7. The statement, "Total bacterial mean RTQ-PCR counts were substantially higher (average 75%) than respiratory pathogen counts", has been removed and the section rewritten.
8. The manuscript includes a comprehensive discussion of PCR-positive non-cultivable organisms.
9. The statement, "Further studies are needed to determine whether alternative ways of measuring bacterial load (including volume of nasal discharge) will have more relevance to clinical practice and in predicting the clinical course of OM", has now been removed.
10. Our reasons for high bacterial load in Aboriginal children are now included on page 3 paragraph 3, and page 10 paragraph 4.
11. The volume of text attached to the figures has been reduced.

Yours sincerely,
Heidi Smith-Vaughan