Reviewer's report

Title: Accuracy of self-reported height measurements in parents and its effect on mid-parental target height calculation

Version: 1 Date: 10 January 2007

Reviewer: Wendy F Paterson

Reviewer's report:

General

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. Background. 2nd paragraph, last sentence: "Multiple studies....from parental report." This statement must be backed up with some appropriate references. Also, I suggest that "Multiple" is changed to "Many".

2. Results - Effect on mid-parental target height. The effect of wrongly reported parental heights on the calculation of mid-parental height and the possible knock-on effect this might have on the investigation of a child with short stature is one of the most important points of your study. This being the case, the results presented should be checked carefully and this section expanded. Please check the statistics - is there really a significant difference between the mean MPTH measured (165.3 cm) vs reported (165.7 cm)? Also, 95% confidence intervals describe the magnitude of an effect and are usually presented as a range, not a single value. Are the values of 2.0 and 2.2 actually SDs?

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

1. Background. 1st sentence. Grammatical error. Should read "...obtaining accurate parental heights is essential when determining the MPTH." not "are essential".

2. Background. Last sentence 1st paragraph. Unnecessary to use both "erroneous" and "mismatch" as both terms have a similar meaning. Suggest using "mismatch" only.

3. Methods. 1st sentence. The word "consecutive" is unnecessary and should be omitted.

4. The term "spouse" suggests that all the parents were married. If this was not the case, the term "partner" would be more appropriate.

5. Methods. 2nd paragraph, 1st sentence. Insert "and analysed the" before "variability" so that sentence reads: "We compared the mean measured and reported heights, and analysed the variability of error.....height self-report."

6. Methods. 2nd paragraph, 2nd sentence. Suggest changing to: "We assessed what effect the discrepancy between measured and reported heights had on mid-parental target height.....for girls."

7. Methods. 3rd paragraph, 1st sentence. Insert "the" before "SPSS".

8. Figure 2. Label the X-axis "Centimetres".

9. Discussion. 2nd paragraph, 2nd sentence. Replace "quite" with "reasonably". Also, please check the percentage of mothers with error of at least 4 cm. This is quoted as 12% in text but 10% in Fig 3. Which is correct?

10. Discussion. 2nd paragraph, 4th sentence. The end of this sentence should read "..and the degree of error." not "..and a degree of the error."
11. Discussion. Last paragraph, 2nd sentence. Replace "normalcy" with "normality".

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1. Background. 1st sentence, 2nd paragraph. I am puzzled by this statement. In the UK parents are routinely measured at paediatric growth and endocrine clinics. Is this not the case in the US? Some clarification of this would be helpful.

2. Methods. One criticism of your study design is that you did not obtain single-observer measurements. Did you validate each measurer’s technique? Did you compare their accuracy? A short statement about this would be helpful.

3. Results. Fathers and Mothers. There is no need to repeat the mean measured paternal/maternal height in the last sentence of each paragraph. Suggest rewording as: "Mean reported paternal height by the mother was 177.0 cm (SD +/- 8.3; 95% CI +/- 1.4) which was significantly greater than the fathers’ measured heights (p=0.0004)."
   (And similar wording for the equivalent sentence under "Mothers".)

4. Discussion. 3rd paragraph, 2nd last sentence. Suggest replacing "In contrast, our study was blinded to the parents..." with "In contrast, our parents were unaware that they were taking part in a study.."

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.