Author's response to reviews


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We would like to thank all of the authors for their comments of our initial submission. We have found them helpful and have outlined below the changes made to address the identified issues.

First we would like to address the wide disparity in the comments made by one reviewer in comparison to those outlined in the other 3 reports. In the general section, the referee suggests that there are 2 major shortcomings with our submission; that the data were obtained from a period of high caries, which makes our arguments invalid, and second, that only the permanent dentition is reported.

We would argue that neither of these issues detracts from the purpose or value of our research. We have highlighted that the major burden of future disease occurs in the groups at lowest risk, indeed those at lowest risk contribute the biggest future burden. The importance of the present paper is that, even if caries levels are lower in certain populations when compared to today for the age group studied, the findings simply reinforce the suggested approach of not adopting a high risk strategy.

We have not attempted to examine or report on caries within the primary dentition. This study concerns itself with the implications for prevention within the permanent dentition, which have implications long after the loss of the primary dentition.

We have noted the comments of the other 3 referees and modified the text as follows.

- We have removed the 2 tables to address the issue of duplication: the description of the figures remains within the results section. The issues identified by the authors have all been addressed as follows:
  - The title has been modified to include ‘..distribution of burden of dental caries in schoolchildren..’,
  - We have removed the word ‘level’ (page 3, paragraph 2, line 7),
  - We have adopted the wording suggested to ‘the average caries experience within the population’ (page 3, paragraph 2, line 12),
  - The word ‘less’ has been used and the word ‘increases’ changed to ‘increase’ (page 5, last paragraph),
  - The words ‘Version 11 for Mac OS X’ have been added (page 6, paragraph 2, line 11)
  - The wording has been checked on page 7.
  - The tense has been modified in the results section.
  - We have added text and a reference addressing the failure to define ‘directed-population’.
• The formatting within the references has been addressed.