Author's response to reviews

Title: Increasing physical activity in postpartum multiethnic women in Hawaii: Results from a quasi-experimental study: the Footsteps Project

Authors:

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Version: 2 Date: 7 November 2008

Author's response to reviews: see over
Prevention and Control Program

November 4, 2008

To the BioMed Central Editorial Team;

I have uploaded my revised manuscript that has been re-titled: “Increasing physical activity in postpartum multiethnic women in Hawaii: Results from a Pilot Study”.

Below are my replies to the reviewers’ comments:

Reply to Reviewer Eboh:

1. “was a power calculation undertaken to ensure any significant results obtained were indeed from the study findings and not by chance”

   We thank this reviewer for this comment and acknowledge our sample size was relatively small (n =20). We did calculate an effect size using Cohen’s d score (for repeated measures) for our primary outcome variable which was minutes of moderate and vigorous physical activity reported at baseline and post-test (2 months later). In this study we had 80% power to detect an effect of d = .80 or larger with an alpha level of 0.05.

   The Cohen’s d score measures the magnitude of a treatment effect and is independent of sample size. The effect size = 0.7, which is classified by Cohen as a “large” effect size. Thus, we feel our result demonstrating an increase in minutes of moderate or vigorous physical activity was a robust result. We have included reference to the calculation of effect size on pages 9 and 10 of the revised manuscript.

2. “Very little information was provided to assess cultural norms and expectation which may impact directly on the level of activity these women engage in”

   We did not specifically ask the participants about their cultural norms or expectations about physical activity; however, we did ask them about personal barriers to physical activity. Several of these barriers reflect cultural norms /perceptions about physical activity, or low motivation to exercise (e.g., ‘others discourage me …about being active”, “I have no time”). We did find a reduction in perceived barriers overall; however, there were no significant differences in these reductions by ethnicity. We have included these results on pages 9 and 10 in the revised manuscript.

Reply to Reviewer Kennedy:

1. “Provide an operational definition of sedentary.”

   We thank the reviewer for highlighting this omission. The revised manuscript has the definition of “sedentary” that was used as an eligibility factor –provided on page 4.

2. “Please describe more fully the SCT/TTM intervention that was based on focus group information from 79 mothers. More information about the intervention is essential and a table/figure would help in illustrating it. In particular, it would be helpful to understand its theoretical foundations in SCT/TTM. Specific questions about the intervention include: - How long was the first and last visit?”
- Where were they conducted?
- How the intervention was developed (i.e. any other input than the focus groups?)
- Was there any pilot testing prior to this study?
- How was the decision to follow for 2 months derived; why not longer?"

The reviewer has made some legitimate points regarding very important details about the intervention that we developed for this pilot study. We have provided detailed information about the development of SCT/TTM intervention and its methods, including a table (Table 1) listing the intervention methods, on pages 4-7 of the revised manuscript.

3. Describe how was the person conducting the intervention trained? Was there a script? Did one or more persons conduct the intervention?

We apologize for not including details about how the health educators were trained to deliver the physical activity counseling. We have included very specific information about the two health educators and the methods used to train and monitor them over the course of the study - on pages 7 and 8 of the revised manuscript.

4. Describe how pedometers were used in the study. The authors’ mention that women used a pedometer in the results, but there is no mention of this in the description of the intervention or in data collection.

The pedometers were not used to collect outcome data; but instead they were used as an intervention tool for self-monitoring and goal setting. We have clarified their use on page 7 of the revised manuscript.

5. Discretionary Revisions
a. “Were there any differences based on infant age?”
   There were no differences in the mother’s increase in minutes of physical activity, based on her baby’s age. This is now mentioned on page 10 of the revised manuscript.

b. “There are no reports of changes in weight/BMI yet these were collected at the 2-month follow up?”
   There were no changes in the women’s BMI, this is noted on page 10 of the revised manuscript. We collected BMI data on the participants as a way to describe the study sample’s physiological characteristics.

c. “I think their program of research could be more fully described and where this is situated. In particular the title refers to the "Footsteps Project" but there is no overall description of this.”
   We apologize if the title of this pilot study was unclear or confusing. We have removed any reference to the “Footsteps Project” which was the name we gave the study. We used this name in recruitment efforts within the community and our logo was a mother walking a baby in a stroller with her footsteps trailing behind her. We have provided more information about the theoretical components of this pilot study on pages 5-10.

Reply Editors’ comments:
1) structure the abstract appropriately
We have revised the abstract such that it is less than 350 words and we have now structured into separate sections.

2) manuscript is better suited for BMC Women’s Health journal.
   We agree with this change in the journal for our manuscript.

   My co-authors and I hope we have adequately responded to the reviewers’ and editors’ comments and suggestions. If not, we will provide additional information upon request.

   Sincerely,

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