Author's response to reviews

Title: Employment in the Ecuadorian Cut-Flower Industry and the Risk of Spontaneous Abortion

Authors:

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Author's response to reviews: see over
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Dear Editors of BMC International Health and Human Rights,

We were delighted to learn of your potential interest in our manuscript (MS: 2007581329275520) entitled, “Employment in the Ecuadorian Cut-Flower Industry and the Risk of Spontaneous Abortion” and appreciate the thoughtful comments of the reviewers. We have carefully reviewed the comments provided by the reviewers and believe that we have revised the manuscript to address their concerns.

On the following page you will find a detailed point-by-point response to the reviewers’ comments, indicating the changes in the final manuscript. Attached you will find a revised version of the paper with highlighted changes.

Thank you for considering this resubmission and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Alexis J. Handal
Sioban D. Harlow
Reviewer 1

We agree with the reviewer that the data is limited, which is demonstrated in our discussion which addresses the limitations of our analysis. However, we would argue that, while the data may be limited, the importance of this paper lies in the fact that very few population-based epidemiologic studies have been conducted addressing the impact of pesticide exposure on reproductive health and pregnancy loss in agricultural communities, particularly in the developing world, where exposures tend to be higher than in industrial countries. This is an important area of research that must be focused on in more depth as more women in developing countries are becoming an integral part of the workforce in large agricultural industries.

Furthermore, we would argue that this is an especially relevant human rights topic in that these women who may be experiencing the adverse impact of occupational pesticide exposure and possibly other adverse working conditions are working in industries that produce goods for the U.S. and other developed countries. Exploratory studies such as ours are important for developing future large-scale studies to more effectively answer the research question of how pesticide exposure impacts pregnancy health and pregnancy loss and how we may develop effective interventions and policies to protect worker health.

Reviewer 2

Minor Essential Revisions
1. p. 2. Results: Corrected “Odds of reporting an SAB increased”

2. p. 2. Conclusions: By negative association, we were referring to an adverse association. We have changed the wording in the text to “adverse.”

3. p. 5. We erroneously reported that n = 126 women were excluded in the analysis because they reported only one pregnancy. This number should be n = 64, which then leaves n = 153 for analysis in this current paper.

4. p.11: Inserted “in” before reproductive in the sentence ending: “a male-mediated role reproductive toxicity.”

5. Table 2: Changed footnote from “< 12 months” to ≤ 12 months.

Reviewer 3

Minor Essential Revisions:

1. As with Reviewer 2, there was confusion on the number of women excluded in our study due to an error in our reporting. As stated above, the correct number should be n = 64 were excluded from the current analysis plus 2 women who did not give reproductive histories, leaving a sample size of 153. Over half of these women reported working in the flower industry in the past six years (56%). We hope this clarifies both reviewers’ questions on this issue.
2. The mother’s ability to read and write was asked as separate questions in “yes/no” format. This has been clarified in the text.

3. The reviewer asked whether it was possible to examine the impact of number of hours spent working or months worked during pregnancy on SAB. Unfortunately, this information is not available. As we state in our limitations, we only have information on hours worked during pregnancy for the index pregnancy in the original 2003 study, but not for the pregnancy that ended in loss.

Discretionary Revisions:

4. A dark line was added to Table 1 to clarify the information presented in the table. We also added n =153 in the titles of Tables 1 and 2 for further clarification.