Author's response to reviews

Title: National Trends in Beverage Consumption in Children from Birth to 5 Years: Analysis of NHANES Across Three Decades

Authors:

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Reviewer: St-Onge
It is not clear why a discussion of the recommendation for exclusive breastfeeding is needed in the introduction of this paper.

Overall the introduction lacks focus and clear path to the study topic and general message.

Authors response: Reference to breastfeeding removed and introduction shortened and revised in an attempt better describe relevance of current work

Tables 1 and 2: SEM values are missing throughout. For Table 1, there should be a footnote explaining the data. In Table 1, was there a minimum amount of each beverage consumed required to be considered a “consumer” or was anyone who reported consuming any amount of the beverage included in this percentage? Please check the fonts in Tables 2 and 3 (different types and/or sizes).

Authors response: Tables orientation converted to landscape which allow better delineation of rows/columns (SEM values are now displayed). Type sizes confirmed and footnote added to Table 1 as suggested to better explain the data in the table. Children 6 months or older who reported drinking any amount of the beverage described in the 24 hour recall were included.

Figure 1. Please correct typo on Flavorerd Milk. I would suggest labeling “Milk” as “Total Milk”

Authors response: Correction made

Figures 2 and 3: Please explain “Cup equivalents”.

Authors response: “Cup equivalents represent 8 oz. units” inserted in legend of Figures 2 and 3

Discussion:
Line 274: were released
Line 302: would be appropriate for overweight
Line 331: delete crossed out “Despite the American”

Authors response: Changes made as suggested

The discussion remains long and reiterates data presented in the results section. I understand that the authors present a lot of information in this paper but repeatedly saying how their results are similar to others’ is not useful to the reader. The discussion from lines 366 onwards is more useful in placing the information on diet trends into context of overall diet quality and health

Authors response: Discussion shortened dramatically and refocused per your suggestion. Comparisons to other published data were shortened significantly or removed.
Reviewer: Popkin
Overview: a more than 10% kcal change in orange juice kcal count is not trivial nor is a 5% shift in whole milk unless this is real but there is no evidence of that in the literature. Please discuss this topic and your underestimations of some items and overestimations of others in the methods and in the limitations of the paper.

Authors response: We respectively disagree that the 5-10% changes we sent in our response to this reviewers previous comments are that important. For example in US nutrition labeling rules calories are rounded to “10-calorie increment above 50 calories” (see 21CFR101.9 Calories, total section). The 5-10% changes we described only exceeded 10 calories for one beverage (12 calories for orange juice). This small change in calories has so little impact on total caloric intake (~1% in child consuming 1000-1200 calories/day) that any additional discussion seems unwarranted. That said, we did revise a statement in the discussion to include this limitation (see line 370).

Second I strongly recommend particularly because of funding you use the term increasingly used in pediatrics and European journals and by the EEU of sugar-sweetened flavored milks. You select a pejorative that belies the content. This is really incorrect scientifically and seems to represent an appeasement of your funding agency.

Authors response: We have inserted in the methods section the fact that flavored milk was “sugar sweetened” (see line 110). We have decided to keep our descriptor as “flavored milk” for this manuscript in keeping with how the USDA MyPlate describes this beverage as described below:

Commonly eaten dairy products

- Milk*all fluid milk:
  - fat-free (skim)
  - low fat (1%)  
  - reduced fat (2%)  
  - whole milk  
  - flavored milks:  
    - chocolate  
    - strawberry  
  - lactose-reduced milks  
  - lactose-free milks

http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/dairy.html
I do not understand why your beverage figures do not separate the sugar-sweetened milk products from the others. I recommend you do this.

Authors response: Excellent comment but unfortunately we did not look at fat level of flavored milk (only in the more recent surveys was type of flavored milk separated into fat types of flavored milk).