Author's response to reviews

Title: Eliciting parental support for the use of newborn blood spots for pediatric research

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Giulia Mangiameli
Executive Editor
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Dear Editor Mangiameli:

Enclosed is our manuscript titled “Eliciting parental support for the use of newborn blood spots for pediatric research” for consideration for publication as a research article in BMC Medical Research Methodology.

We believe this manuscript will be of interest to the readers of the journal as our study can serve as an important reference for epidemiologic researchers looking to explore this resource for population based research of rare exposures (such as infertility treatment) or outcomes (such as neurodevelopment). The journal has particularly published on research methods regarding participation in epidemiologic research (e.g., Murdoch 2014, Paul 2014). Our article is very timely in view of the Newborn Screening Saves Lives Reauthorization Act passed last December, requiring parental consent for use of residual blood spot specimens. We here convey a practical example of leveraging Newborn Screening for residual specimens, demonstrating feasibility for future pediatric research endeavors. We aimed to determine the characteristics associated with parental consent for use of newborn dried blood spots for research purposes, and to identify population subgroups which may be less willing to consent to such usage. We also sought to assess the sufficiency of remaining specimen volume. The Upstate KIDS Study followed 6,171 infants born in New York State (excluding the 5 boroughs of NYC) between 2008 and 2010 beginning at 4 months postpartum until age 3 years. Consent for use of residual blood spots was sought at 8 months. Our results indicate that the majority of parents (62%) agree to such use of residual blood spots from their infants and that consent did not strongly differ by parental or infant characteristics. Subsequent retrieval was highly successful with 99% of consented infants having specimen available. These findings are novel as we are unaware of previous papers that have leveraged use of newborn blood spots for population based research focused on children’s growth and development.
This manuscript has not been published except in abstract and poster form to the American College of Epidemiology Annual meeting, Silver Spring, MD, Sept 8, 2014. It is not being considered for publication elsewhere. All authors have approved the manuscript and have no conflicts of interest to declare.

Sincerely,

Edwina Yeung, PhD, ScM