Author’s response to reviews

Title: The relationship between breastfeeding and reported respiratory and gastrointestinal infection rates in young children

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Editors of BMC Pediatrics,

Thank you again for the reviewers’ time and consideration of this manuscript. We have made the remaining minor revision suggested by the reviewers. These changes to the manuscript have been indicated by track changes. A response to the reviewers’ comments can be found below.

Best regards,

Nicole Frank
Reviewer reports:

Caroline Lodge (Reviewer 1): I commend the authors on their thorough and informative responses to all my queries.

I only have only one further minor comment:

The refs for breastfeeding and OM referred to in discussion first para(5,6,8) are from 1994-1997 - consider the more recent systematic review on this subject by Bowatte et al. which also found reduced OM up to 2 years following either exclusive or non-exclusive breastfeeding in the first 6 months of life)


This is an excellent resource, and thank you for providing it. Many of the articles reviewed in this meta-analysis already appeared in my own list of references, but I was able to more explicitly include the results of the meta-analysis in regards to the inverse relationship between breastfeeding and otitis media up to the age of 2 years, as well as include the views of the authors regarding the previous lack of evidence for (and paucity of research investigating) protective effects of breastfeeding beyond the age of 2 years.

As the reviewer suggested, I therefore added the following to the first paragraph of the discussion section, after mentioning the study finding that the protective effects of breastfeeding remain at work at least through the age of 18 months for children who continue to receive breastmilk:

This is not an unprecedented discovery as, according to a meta-analysis published in 2015, cumulative evidence supports that breastfeeding protects against otitis media until the age of two years (36).

I also re-worked paragraph 6 of the discussion section to read:

Our study supports that exclusive breastfeeding for longer duration is related to a decreased incidence of otitis media once breastfeeding has stopped (i.e. beyond the age of 12 months) up to the age of four years. Longer duration of exclusive breastfeeding protecting against future incidence of otitis media has been suggested by other studies (25-27), though none followed this trend as far as this study did (up to four years of life). This is therefore an important finding, as protective effects of breastfeeding in relation to otitis media beyond the age of two years have been previously poorly supported and little studied (36).
Karim Premji Manji, MBBS, MMED, MPH (Reviewer 2): Please include all comments for the authors in this box rather than uploading your report as an attachment. Please only upload as attachments annotated versions of manuscripts, graphs, supporting materials or other aspects of your report which cannot be included in a text format.

Please overwrite this text when adding your comments to the authors.

I will enter my responses for the reviewers into the appropriate box when uploading my second revision.