Author’s response to reviews

Title: Parent's Perception of Stroller Use in Young Children: A Qualitative Study

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Author’s response to reviews: see over
Re: Manuscript “Parent’s Perceptions of Stroller Use in Young Children: A Qualitative Study”

Dear Dr. Patrick Harris,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this revised manuscript entitled “Parent’s Perceptions of Stroller Use in Young Children: A Qualitative Study” to BMC Public Health. The reviewers commented on the quality of the manuscript and its contribution to a novel emerging area of research as follows: ‘This is a well-written paper addressing a novel, important and emerging area of research. The authors have done a great job of capturing the complexity of stroller use and highlight the challenges of incorporating this behaviour into guidelines for parents’

We have addressed both reviewers’ suggestions for revision, below.

Reviewer 1 (Minor essential revisions)

1. Introduction Line 75. Please reference the literature on stroller related injuries and any literature on the prevalence, predictors and health outcomes to which you refer as being limited.


Methods

2. Please include the reason for your sample size and why you decided to stop data collection after 14 interviews.

   After 14 interviews, we felt we had reached theoretical saturation in the themes that emerged. (paragraph 2, page 6)

3. There is a lack of information describing the sampling and recruitment approach. What strategy of sampling did you adopt purposive, convenience, snowball? Why were the two sites chosen to recruit participants from and are they similar to the other sites participating in TARGet Kids? During recruitment how were the participants invited to participate? It would also be useful for the reader to know more about the TARGet Kids in general to give an impression of whether parents involved in TARGet Kids are...
representative of the general population of parents. In addition, it is not clear whether families involved in TARGet Kids are receiving advice to engage in healthy behaviours which might influence their views around their child’s physical activity.

Recruitment procedures and inclusion criteria for TARGet Kids! are detailed elsewhere and we added the reference. We used a convenience sampling technique, and recruited participants from two TARGet Kids! primary care practice sites. These two sites were chosen as they were located in two distinct urban neighbourhoods in Toronto, and had adequate space to conduct qualitative interviews. Participants of TARGet Kids! were not participating in any TARGet Kids! related intervention studies that pertain to physical activity prior to or during the time of recruitment for this study (paragraph 1, page 5). We also added the time period of recruitment as follows: The interviews took place from January 2012 to August 2012 (paragraph 2, page 5).

4. It is not clear whether your study interviewed mothers only and whether this was your intention. Did you try to recruit fathers to the study? If so what reasons were given for non-participation? If the sample is entirely mothers it would be clearer to make explicit reference to this throughout rather than referring to them as parents. I would also like to see this noted as a limitation to the research.

The parent or caregiver who attended the well-child visit was invited to participate in this study. 3 participants were fathers; this was clarified on paragraph 2, page 6. We appreciate that additional interviews with fathers would be useful as father’s perceptions on stroller use and physical activity may be different from mothers (paragraph 2, page 15).

Results

5. Although the secondary objective is to examine parents’ perceptions of the relationship between stroller use and their children’s health, the final theme is perceived impact on ‘physical activity’ which I feel doesn’t address children’s health in broadest sense. Could the authors either do more to describe the relationship between stroller use and child health (if there are findings relating to this), for example well-being and sleep or consider changing the secondary objective to children’s physical activity rather than health?

Thank you for this thoughtful comment. We clarified that our primary objective was to explore parents perception of the context of stroller use, with a secondary objective on the impact on children’s physical activity. We used thematic analysis and these were the reported themes that emerged; parents did discuss other health outcomes as well and these were noted. As noted, parents did not easily make connections between stroller use and physical activity or health outcomes for children. An important next step may be to probe issues as they relate to other health outcomes such as sleep. This was added in paragraph 1, page 16.

Discussion
6. Given the complexity of stroller use and the mixed feelings about whether it leads to greater or lesser physical activity it seems that future research might be needed to develop measures of the time spent in strollers to start to unpick the relationship between stroller use and physical activity. I would like to see the authors go a bit further in the discussion to suggest future directions for this area of research.

We agree and added the following statement to the conclusions ‘…Strollers are commonly used device for young children and a better understanding of health impacts is needed’. (paragraph 1, page 16). We have recommended areas for future research (paragraph 2, page 15).

7. It would be useful to draw on previous qualitative studies examining parental perceptions of young children’s physical activity generally to place these findings within the context of this broader literature....For example: Hesketh KD, Hinkley T, Campbell KJ. Children's physical activity and screen time: qualitative comparison of views of parents of infants and preschool children. Int J Behav Nutr Phys Act. 2012 Dec 28;9:152. doi: 10.1186/1479-5868-9-152.

Thank you for this important comment. We added the suggested reference, addressed this issue as follows in paragraph 1, page 14).

It is important to note that when parents reflected on the relationship between strollers and physical activity, most explained that they did not perceive any connection in their own families. This is consistent with a previous qualitative study of parents of preschool aged children that found parents believed children are naturally physically active and there is little need for parental engagement to promote activity It may not be useful, therefore, for stroller related recommendations to be focused on physical activity related outcomes.

8. We ensured that full stop are used after the in-text citations throughout.

9. Please do not duplicate the same quotes in the main text and in the tables, where this has happened can you find another quote to use in the table?

We removed all duplicate quotes and replaced as appropriate.

Reviewer 2 Minor issues the authors should consider are outlined below:

Abstract:
10. You state that your child participants are 0-6 years of age but later in the manuscript you indicate that they are between 1-5 years of age. It would be helpful for readers to be specific with your age range.

Thank you for observing that discrepancy. Parents who participated in this study had at least 1 child enrolled in TARGet Kids, between the ages of 1-5 years of age. We reported the mean (SD) and age range of our subjects. Often, parents referred to other children in their family. We did collect information about ages of other children and we reported this as well. The mean (SD) age of the children that were the focus of the interview were 31 (17) months; they had a total of 12 siblings with a mean (SD) age of 67 (49) months (page 6, paragraph 1).

11. Methods: It would be helpful for the reader to provide more detail into why 14 semi-structured interviews were conducted. Was it that only 14 parents agreed to participate in your study, or was it that after 14 parents you felt you had reached theoretical saturation in the thoughts/ideas that were being presented? Regardless of sample size, knowing this information helps put your findings into context for readers.

We used a convenience sample approach to recruit parents (added on paragraph 1, page 5). After 14 parents we felt we had reached theoretical saturation in the themes that we reported. We added this on paragraph 2, page 6.

Discussion:

12. Page 14, Line 310: It would be helpful to comment on the small sample size of your study. While a small sample size, and the population from which the parents came from limits generalizability, the small sample size also prevents you from commenting on how opinions of stroller use might differ by age. I would suspect that stroller use is inherently different in a 1 year old vs. a 5 year old. Between this age group, the physical activity recommendations for children change (by age 5 we are looking for 60 minutes of moderate/vigorous physical activity, instead of just the 180 minutes of active play at any intensity suggested for younger ages). Commenting on how parent perceptions of stroller use change as the young child ages throughout the preschool age group would be helpful for future researchers and policy makers.

We agree with your comments and added the following: Our sample size prevented us from commenting on how perceptions of stroller use may vary by child’s age. This is an important point as there may be different uses of strollers depending on the age and developmental stage of the child. In addition, current physical activity guidelines vary by child age developmental stage as well as age and this concept was discussed (paragraph 1, page 9). It highlights the need for further research that expands the sample of interviewees to include parents of children of different ages,…(paragraph 2, page 15).
Thank you again for the opportunity to resubmit a revised manuscript. This revised manuscript is being submitted only to BMC Public Health. It will not be submitted elsewhere while under consideration, it has not been published elsewhere, and, should it be published in BMC Public Health, it will not be published elsewhere—either in similar form or verbatim—without permission of the editors.

All authors are responsible for the reported research. All have made contributions to conception and design, acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data; drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content; and final approval of the version to be published.

Sincerely,

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