Reviewer’s report

Title: Experience of maintaining tooth brushing for children born with a cleft lip and/or palate

Version: 1 Date: 22 Sep 2016

Reviewer: Anna-Lena Ostberg

Reviewer's report:

GENERAL COMMENT

This study has an ambitious aim to explore the motivation for tooth-brushing in a special patient group, namely children with a cleft lip and/or palate. The authors wanted to mirror the combined views of the children and their parent(s). The idea is interesting and possible results should be useful for the dental care. The authors have made a good attempt however, the results are meagre and the presentation rather mixed-up.

Other main points are the lack of theoretical framework and subsequent description of the data analysis. Basic demands as coordination of title, aim, results and conclusion are not fulfilled.

When having read through the manuscript, my reflection is: what in the findings is specific for children with cleft lip/palate? In some passages their state is mentioned but much could concern children without cleft lip/palate as well. I would like the authors to reflect on this. I understand that the authors did not aim for a deeper understanding of the problem, however this would have been more interesting.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

Title and abstract

The abbreviation CL/P needs to be explained both in the title and in the abstract. The central concept in the title appears to be "motivation" which is not clear further on in aim, results and discussion. Please see below. Also, the title gives an impression of a broader perspective than what the manuscript is about: "oral health care" in the title ends up with tooth brushing.
The abstract is wordy and can/must be cut down considerably. Avoid repetition of information and keep to background information in that section. The conclusion is not based on findings in this study. Please also see below.

Introduction
This section needs improvement. References are lacking to some extent (line 1 for instance). The reasoning in lines 18-22 seems to refer to the knowledge-attitude-practice model: is that so? Anyhow, you must develop this part and provide a reference.

The state CL/P should be more described which is needed for a possible readership not so well acquainted with it. Which are the problems? What about James Lind Alliance? Which treatments are meant in line 41? Also, the perspective is narrowed to UK (lines 46-8). This must be widened.

Page 3, bottom: the design shall be not mentioned until in the Methods.
Please focus the aim better (even if it is narrow as is) and check that it is the same in the abstract. Also, please scrutinize the latter part of the background and consider to move some lines to the discussion section.

Methods
The main point here is the lack of theoretical a framework, which shall be accounted for when using a qualitative design.

Another main point is the choice and interviewing of informants. I have tried to understand how the interviews were performed but have failed. Were the children the main interview persons and the parents just sitting aside, interspersing? Or did they talk one at a time in due order (not very qualitative though). Or was it more like a focus group conversation? This is especially unclear about the telephone interviews. The number of informant families were 15 plus 5 plus 2 that is 22, constituting "51% of those invited" (p4, line33). Unclear whether 43 families were invited - is it so? Are parent+child seen as an entity?
The topic/interview guide must be described. How were the interview areas introduced?

Page 5, lines 6-10: The data analysis is said not to be driven by a theoretical framework or preconceptions. This is unsatisfactory described, please see above. Also, the background and possible preconceptions of the researchers performing the analysis must be described (profession, earlier experiences etc.).

Results
The organization/presentation of the results is confusing.
The headings are as follows:
- Motivation of caring for teeth
- Parents as "the enabler"
- The nature of obstacles
- Obstacles and enablers varied by context

How do these categories relate to each other? A sketch would be of great help to the reader and I would say, it is necessary. Subcategories as social acceptability should preferably be included in the figure, too.

Throughout, there is a problem whether parental or child views are presented. Also, the age span 5-11 years is rather wide - could any differences in the reasoning among children of different ages be discerned?

Specific: In the last para in page 6: "enabling" seems more like hunting or forcing the children.

Discussion
The discussion section is short and rather superficial. A large part of it (§2) is dedicated to a discussion about "implementation intentions", which seems to be of great interest to the authors however not investigated in the current study. Is this the next study?
Methodological discussion: in qualitative research "response rate" is not an issue; the quality of the gathered data is the important thing. This paragraph is entirely lacking references.

Conclusion: this must be grounded on the findings in the current study - and, as written above, coincide with that in the abstract.

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.
Yes

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.
Yes

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.
Yes

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.
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