Author’s response to reviews

Title: Emotional stimuli candidates for behavioural intervention in the prevention of early childhood caries: a pilot study

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Author’s response to reviews:

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Dear Editor,


Manuscript (MS) was revised according to referees’ suggestions (we submit a clean version of our manuscript and we did not include track changes or highlighting) and all questions raised were addressed (particular changes made are listed). We acknowledge the reviewers’ effort and hope that the revised form of the MS will be acceptable for publication in your journal.

Yours faithfully,
Specific changes made in manuscript OHEA-D-18-00175R4 – revision

To: Reviewer 1

1. The manuscript has been improved. Necessary revisions have been addressed. However, there are several minor issues to be touched.

Answer: Thank you for your evaluation.

2. I am sorry that I did not notice this before. The study must be registered in an appropriate registry (i.e. clinicaltrials.gov) and the registration number and date of registration should be in stated in the trial registration section.

Answer: We did not register our study because no health care intervention of human participants was performed. We believe that this is in line with the principles mentioned in the Submission Guidelines for BMC Oral Health (https://bmcoralhealth.biomedcentral.com/submission-guidelines/preparing-your-manuscript/research-article): “Trial registration: If your article reports the results of a health care intervention on human participants, it must be registered in an appropriate registry and the registration number and date of registration should be in stated in this section. If it was not registered prospectively (before enrollment of the first participant), you should include the words 'retrospectively registered'. See our editorial policies for more information on trial registration.”
Definitely, the registration will be done within the follow-up study where these emotional stimuli will used for the behavioral intervention.

3. I have stated that the aim should be written in the introduction section, however, the format of the journal requires otherwise. So the authors should do as the instructions to authors says.

Answer: The aim of study was replaced to the Methods section (page 5, lines 95-97).

4. The power of the study should be stated in the statistical analysis section.

Answer: The power of the study calculation was added to the Methods section (page 7, lines 143-150).

5. If you have used 95% confidence interval, you should present the statistical differences as “p<0.05”.

Answer: P-levels are represented as suggested by the reviewer.

6. As far as I concern, with these minor corrections, the manuscript is worthy to be published in this journal. Thank you for your efforts.

Answer: Thank you for your suggestions and critical view. We did our best to improve our MS.

To: Reviewer 4

1. I would like to congratulate the authors for the improvements in the manuscript and significant changes that contributed to increase the quality of the paper. I have some minor comments for the current version.

Answer: Thank you for your evaluation.

2. Abstract
   Line 27: correct the word “risky”;

Line 26: The information in parenthesis seems unnecessary, since this will soon be taken up in the objective, which by the way was well described.

Line 32: “eletronic questionnaire” instead of “questionnaire”

Line 34: I believe that the sentence would be clearer if written as “The emotional impact of each stimuli in the mothers was evaluated using the...” instead of “The mothers evaluated the emotional impact of each stimuli using the...”

Answer: Abstract was modified according to all reviewer’s suggestions (page 2).

3. Introduction

Line 71: The first sentence seems already to be finalizing the introduction. I suggest the removal of this sentence from line 71 and inclusion of the same sentence at the beginning of the last paragraph (line 94), before the aim of the study. The last paragraph of introduction section would be writing as: “In this context, searching for effective approaches to motivate people to change risk behaviour or to create health-promoting behaviour, is a major challenge of preventive medicine. Thus, the aim of this study was to ascertain which visual stimuli with a supporting text evoke the strongest emotional response in infants’ mothers and, therefore, are suitable candidates for inclusion in behavioural interventions within the prevention of ECC”.

Line 78: I suggest a break of paragraph which starts with “The general aim...”

Answer: Your suggestion seems to be correct, but we have to respect the Submission Guidelines for BMC Oral Health, and thus the Aim of study was replaced to Methods section (page 5, lines 95-97). However, we replaced the first sentence (from original line 71) to the end of the Introduction section (page 5, lines 91-92).

4. Methods

Line 73, 75, 83: I suggest rephrase the sentences using the pronouns “us”, “our”, “me”.

Answer: The pronouns were replaced by other, more adequate expressions, only the expressions in the converted commas were kept (more ‘good for me’ or less ‘bad for me’ state), (Introduction section, page 4 and 5).

5. Methods

Line 99: “The originally”; instead of “Our originally”;

Answer: The sentence was corrected (Methods section, page 5, line 8).
6. Methods

Line 106: In this sentence the picture numbers are shown. The method initially presented an instrument with 10 positive and 10 negative pictures and this number is not in accordance with the number presented in this sentence, where eleven are presented as “represent desired preventive behaviour”. Besides, I suggest that the numbers be enclosed in parentheses in the sentence of line 107, for example “The most serious conditions were included in aversive pictures. The positive picture set was composed of the most desired aims of prevention of dental caries (Pictures 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 18, and 20)”. If the authors choose to make this modification, the last sentence should be reformulated.

Answer: We are sorry for the mistake. Picture 11 was intended as negative visual stimulus (dental treating of painful patient). The last sentence was corrected (Methods section, page 5, lines 105-107).

7. Methods

Line 124: I suggest characterize the study in the method section as a pilot study.

Answer: The study was characterized as pilot (Methods section, page 5, line 95).

8. Methods

Line 128: It is still not clear how the questionnaire was applied, despite mentioning that it was an electronic questionnaire. How was it sent? Was it filled out by the mother from an online form access? Were they oriented about the form of access? Could this have influenced the response rate?

Answer: The link to the electronic questionnaire was sent to mothers’ e-mail addresses, the questionnaire was filled out online. The fact, that the electronic questionnaire was filled out by mothers online, may have played a role in the low response rate. Mothers were not under pressure to participate. On the other hand, responders should be in emotional stable state in time of filling out the electronic questionnaire. We added this information into the Methods section (page 7, lines 133-135) and the Discussion section (pages 12-13, lines 275-278).

9. Results and Discussion

The authors mentioned about the possibility of selection bias in the line 278 and complementary analysis could be elucidated this issue. The response rate was very low. Is there some
information of the mothers that not response the questionnaire? I suggest that the authors make a sensitivity analysis with data from non-responding mothers in order to more robustly discuss the reasons for joining the survey. This may be especially important in future studies that seek to identify who would benefit from this intervention or assist in the process of developing strategies to improve adherence of certain groups to intervention. I suggest that these concerns will be further explored in the results and discussion section.

Answer: We agree with the reviewer, unfortunately only 39 mothers signed informed consent forms and agreed to participate in our study. We cannot analyze data from mothers who were not interested to participate in our study.