Reviewer's report

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

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Reviewer: Francine Costa

Reviewer's report:

The manuscript investigated an interesting approach that "could be" used to prevention of oral diseases, including early childhood caries. However, some methodological aspects are unclear. The main concern about the study is related to what the study seems to be evaluating and what it actually evaluates.

The title and aim of the study suggest that an intervention study was performed, since the study indicated a tool to prevention for dental caries, but this has not been tested. It was observed in the study the emotional stimuli of mothers in certain situations, which does not necessarily imply in behavior changes and prevention of dental caries, and this should be tested. I suggest rewriting title and aim.

Some minor concerns are pointed below:

Abstract

[1] The conclusion section should be reviewed since the tool has not been tested.

Introduction:

[1] The last paragraph of the introduction does not seem appropriate since it presents information that must be in the methods section and does not contain the objective or even a hypothesis for the study. It should be made clearer that a pilot study of tool development is being done and not of this tool as an approach to ECC prevention.
Methods:

[1] The aim of the study should be in the introduction section. Was the aim of the study to establish a suitable behavioral intervention approach and its level which could affect risky behavior of mothers and change it? The conclusion not responded to this aim.

[2] I suggest present the child age in months;

[3] It is unclear what was assessed in the interview and what was self-reported. Only the age in months was described in the characteristics of the sample. Could other characteristics influence the outcome of the study? Why were not they described?

[4] More details about SAM method could be described, as the score and domains.

Results:

[1] The description of the stimulus could be described in the results instead of using the numbers in order to make the reading more fluent in this section, so the authors would not have to go to the supplementary material for interpretation of each result, but this is only a suggestion and not a problem.

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

No

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

No

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.
I am able to assess the statistics

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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