Reviewer's report

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

Version: 3 Date: 31 Dec 2018

Reviewer: Francine Costa

Reviewer's report:

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.

1. 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..."

2. 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 95 strongest emotional response in infants' mothers and, therefore, are suitable candidates for 96 inclusion in behavioural interventions within the prevention of ECC".

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

Line 73, 75, 83: I suggest rephrase the sentences using the pronouns "us", "our", "me".
3. Methods

Line 99: "The originally" instead of "Our originally"

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.

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

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?

4. 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.

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.

Unable to assess

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?
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I am able to assess the statistics

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