Author’s response to reviews

Title: Understanding the interactions between iron supplementation, infectious disease and adverse birth outcomes is essential to guide public health recommendations

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We thank the reviewers attention to detail. We have improved the correspondence by making all the minor amendments suggested by the reviewers below. Please see track changes document submitted with together with a clean version.

Reviewer reports:

Reviewer #1: This correspondence is in response to another correspondence that relates to the authors previously published paper. Simply, this is a justification and defence for the findings from the original paper that found a protective effect on birthweight in women who were iron-deficient. It highlights our lack of understanding of the interaction between nutritional deficiencies and infectious diseases, which are particularly relevant in resource-poor settings. The main argument centres around the the heterogeneity of the results in this area - which have been summarised in a Cochrane review.

Please note there are two line numbering systems on the version I reviewed and I am unable to determine which is the journal generated version - I have therefore used the continuous version and NOT the page wise version.

There are a few minor essential errors that should be corrected.
Page 3, line 94: The CI's are reported in reverse order to the standard practice. Please adjust and use to two decimal places as reported in the Cochrane review. (Mean difference 23.75; 95% CI -3.02 to 50.51).

Please also then reverse the following sentence so that it follows the same order. "… daily iron supplementation decreased birthweight by as much as 3g or increased birthweight by as much as 50g…"

Minor errors

I suggest that you also change the sentence no.70. to improve readability from "… causal pathways, it is not evidence enough to recommend that…" to "… causal pathways, it is not sufficient evidence to recommend that…"

I would also change the sentence line 86 from "…supplementation, it is important to consider findings from our study and other studies, …" to "…supplementation, it is important to consider all of the evidence, …"

I recommend deleting all the slashes, and changing to a comma.

Line 111, between and /or change slash to a comma.

Line 119 change slash to a comma

Line 139 change to a comma

Line 145, change to comma

Reviewer #2: This is a very well written and informative correspondence (response to comment by Verhoef et al.). I would only suggest to revise the sentence in lines 73 to 76.