Author's response to reviews

Title: Perfluoroalkyl acids and time to pregnancy revisited: An update from the Danish National Birth Cohort

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor,

Thank you for the opportunity to correspond with the same two reviewers, of whom Matthew Longnecker did not request further changes.

Alan Ducatman wrote:
Discretionary Revisions only.
The authors have reasonably addressed most of my concerns. They probably know that I continue to believe that the language of the conclusions should be toned down to express uncertainty; based on small numbers and the primitive state of our knowledge concerning perfluorocarbon excretion. This is a matter of style, I see this as within the authors’ purview.
I appreciate the many thoughtful and careful responses to the first review. I do not agree with the author’s logic on all points in their response, but do think their conclusion will ultimately be confirmed by better designed studies.
One small critique has not been addressed, and I think it reasonable to leave to the authors if they wish improve their manuscript.
• Despite the authors’ belief to the contrary, we disagree that the absence of eGFR remains as a study weakness. I think it is a weakness. One of two topics in the paper is excretion of perfluorocarbons. These compounds are excreted by the kidneys and by the gut (varies by compound, and likely by person). Chronic kidney disease probably affects perfluorocarbon excretion, and certainly affects fertility. Whether or not that association with fertility has been presented in terms of eGFR specifically is insufficient reason to ignore kidney function as a variable. My reading of the paper is that it contains neither CKD exclusion nor eGFR. There is a reason that most previous papers adjust for eGFR if kidney disease could interact with the health outcome.
While the absence of this adjustment is a study weakness, I surmise that the adjustment would not change results enough to affect conclusions. I ask the authors to think about if they want to mention the absence of eGFR as a limitation. I doubt that most readers will pick up on the detail, unless told.

We are grateful for the thoughtful comments. As requested, we added a paragraph on eGFR on p.13, lines 227-228: "We did not measure the glomerular filtration rate, which may affect both PFAA levels and the fecundability.”

Best wishes,
On behalf of the authors,
Cathrine Carlsen Bach