Author’s response to reviews

Title: Illawarra Born cross generational health study: feasibility of a multi-generational birth cohort study

Authors:
Michelle Townsend (mtownsen@uow.edu.au)
Megan Kelly (meganj@uow.edu.au)
Pickard Judy (jpickard@uow.edu.au)
Theresa Larkin (tlarkin@uow.edu.au)
Victoria Flood (vicki.flood@sydney.edu.au)
Peter Caputi (pcaputi@uow.edu.au)
Ian Wright (iwright@uow.edu.au)
Alison Jones (alisonj@uow.edu.au)
Brin Grenyer (grenyer@uow.edu.au)

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Gillian Lancaster

Pilot and Feasibility Studies

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Illawarra Born cross generational health study: feasibility of a multi-generational birth cohort study

Michelle L Townsend, PhD; Megan A Kelly; Pickard A Judy; Theresa A Larkin, PhD; Victoria M Flood, PhD; Peter Caputi, PhD; Ian M Wright; Alison Jones; Brin F.S. Grenyer, PhD

Pilot and Feasibility Studies
Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the peer reviewers. Please find below our response to each reviewer comment and an indication of how we have modified the manuscript.

REVIEWER COMMENT 1

This is an interesting paper of preparation for a large scale cohort study. The objectives of the pilot were to look at recruitment, data management and collection over 5 waves, finding on research questions, sample size estimates (referred incorrectly as statistical power), predictors of outcomes and acceptability to stakeholders etc.

AUTHOR RESPONSE

References to statistical power to sample size estimates have been track changed in the text.

REVIEWER COMMENT 2

Please state clearly in a list the objectives of the pilot study after the Aim at the beginning of the methods, and also in the Abstract. Please ensure the methods and results are described in the same order as the objectives in the list, and similarly commented on in the discussion in the same order. Please ensure all methods of analysis are described for all objectives.

AUTHOR RESPONSE

A list of the objectives of the pilot study has been added at the beginning of the methods section as well as in the abstract.

The methods section now states:
Objectives of the feasibility study: The purpose of this paper is to report on the feasibility and acceptability of the research protocol for cross-generation health study in the community. The objectives were to determine:

- The feasibility of the research protocol; was it possible to recruit participants and collect data as planned;

- The acceptability of the research protocol; was the data collection procedures suitable from the perspective of the participants; and

- The approaches needed to support the collaborative approach between the hospital and the University.

The abstract has had the following addition:

Methods/design: The purpose of this paper is to report on the feasibility and acceptability of the research protocol for collaborative cross-generation health study in the community, and test recruitment and outcome measures.

The methods, results and discussion sections have been substantially revised with track changes to reflect this ordering of objectives.

REVIEWER COMMENT 3

Please add a sample size section and rationale for the chosen number in the pilot before the Analysis section (no formal calculation is required just a justification).

AUTHOR RESPONSE

A new section before the analysis section has been added as follows:
Sample size section and rationale: A recent systematic review of longitudinal birth cohort studies in Australia and New Zealand reported a median of 1095 mothers across 23 studies [14]. Therefore, for this feasibility study a target sample of 55 women (5%) was deemed suitable.

REVIEWER COMMENT 4

Please ensure the results for all listed objectives are described in the Results section eg. refinements to the research questions (are these currently listed?), predictors of outcomes.

AUTHOR RESPONSE

The results section has been revised to reflect all listed objectives and is reported in that order.

REVIEWER COMMENT 5

> Please add tables of results summarising the described statistical analysis which is currently missing altogether from the manuscript. Please add a description of the pilot cohort characteristics and a summary of the variables collected (eg mean (sd) age etc) at least at baseline and for the last time point. Include findings for all the listed objectives eg summaries of amount of data collected over 5 waves, results of multilevel modelling. Please add corresponding text to explain the quantitative results.

AUTHOR RESPONSE

We have added Table 3. Selected characteristics of Illawarra Born mothers and children which contains data from baseline and the final time point. We have also added findings for all of the listed objectives. As the changes are quite significant we have provided the reviewers with a tracked change version as well as a clean version for ease of review.

REVIEWER COMMENT 6

> The authors might usefully refer to Eldridge et al PFS 2016 CONSORT extension to pilot trials for useful examples of items to report (not all will be relevant as this is not a trial but the objectives and analyses sections are useful.
Thank you for this helpful suggestion we have reviewed the document and taken into account in the developing the revisions.

We thank the reviewers for their feedback and believe the manuscript has been improved as a result.