

LETTER

Authors' reply to the letter to the editor from Peres KG, Feldens CA, Nascimento GG, Peres MA, Vitolo MR and Barros AJD

To the Editor,

We thank Peres KG and collaborators for their interest in our study and the compliments with the constructive criticisms made. We also thank the authors for having praised our methodological approach.

We agree with the final remark (last paragraph) in the letter and observe that there is a reasonable interpretation of the conclusion in the Abstract and in the last section of our article. We also agree with the authors' directives to foster dental health promotion and caries prevention for toddlers.

Our study indeed found an association between prolonged breastfeeding (≥ 12 months) (PBF) and increased risk of dental caries, although of modest magnitude (OR = 1.13). This result confirms the findings observed in the primary dentition by other prospective studies, which were adjusted for socioeconomic factors and sugar consumption.¹⁻⁵

We aimed to go further than what was already known on this topic by assessing this association through mediation analysis. We found that caries risk was 'minimally mediated', to quote the authors, by sugar consumption among children breastfed between 12 and 23 months. We did stress this result in the Discussion section because it was not previously reported in other birth cohort studies. We believe that even being 'minimally mediated' this mediation was statistically significant. And we certainly agree, 'more scientific clarification is still needed' on this subject.

The authors also highlighted that the cut-off point for sugar consumption showed in Table S2 is relatively high (≥ 6 times a day). We again agree with them in this aspect. However, we should emphasize that this cut-off value was defined based on overall high frequency of sugar consumption in our study population. This is an important public health concern taking into account the WHO recommendation that infants and toddlers under 2 years of age should consume no sugar.⁶

Lastly, we also support the 2019 WHO technical manual entitled 'Ending childhood dental caries',⁷ where the recommended action is 'to promote, protect and support exclusive breastfeeding up to age six months and introduction of nutritionally adequate and safe complementary (solid) foods at age six months together with continued

breastfeeding up to two years of age or beyond' by the rationale that 'breastfeeding is associated with better general health and a lower risk of early childhood caries (ECC) in infants and children'.

KEYWORDS

caries, dental health, early childhood caries, nutrition

FUNDING INFORMATION

Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico; Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

None of the authors have a conflict of interest to disclose.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing is not applicable to this letter as no new data were created or analysed.

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Authors' Reply to the Letter to the Editor: 'Prolonged breastfeeding, sugar consumption and dental caries at 2 years of age: a birth cohort study', *Community Dentistry and Oral Epidemiology*. To link to this article: doi: 10.1111/cdoe.12813

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