

Author's response to reviews

Title: Longitudinal Assessment of PCBs and Chlorinated Pesticides in Pregnant Women from Western Canada

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Response to Reviewers

General comments

We are very appreciative of the helpful comments by the reviewers. One important item to state at the beginning is that an error in the calculation of non-detection levels gave spuriously higher levels of PCBs as identified by reviewer #3. This has been corrected and the tables adjusted accordingly.

Reviewer #1. Pierre Ayotte

1.

a. We have provided information on the techniques used, participation in international panels and the parameters of quality in the results section by adjusting the text and referencing published methods by Dmitrovic and Chan.

b. The statement has been adjusted as recommended.

c. We have indicated that this observation is not original and have made reference to the recommended article

d. We have eliminated the discussion related to the maternal fetal gradient

e. Although the study was not directed to the evaluation of outcome, it would be of interest to describe these outcomes. We have indicated there was not sufficient power to indicate the organochlorines were without an effect on obstetrical outcomes

2.

a. we have provided published information related to the measures of quality requested published by Dmitrovic and Chan.

b. The LOQ of a PCB measurement in blood serum is independent of its lipid content

c. We have adjusted to indicate LOQ.

d. The detection rates for PCB 153 in Table 2 are all >90%. The correction in calculations should deal with this problem. Calculation of the aggregate % detection would be potentially misleading.

3.

a. The detection rates for PCB 153 in Table 2 are all >90%

b. We have eliminated the statistical measures in Table 2 and simply describe the paired T-Tests done on subjects with complete sampling in the text.

Reviewer #2 David Carpenter

1. Thank-you for the encouraging comments. The results have been clarified

2.

a. The results in Table 2 have been corrected. Thank-you for this observation. Please see above in General Comments.

b. The results have been corrected

c. The measures in Table 2 have been clarified. Please see above item 3b.

d. The results have been corrected

e. The results have been corrected

3.

a. We have used the statement from the first reviewer and modified it to be compatible with this reviewer as well. Wolf reference in page 10 line 19.

b. We have increased references to the role of PCBs and preterm labor and appreciate the reference to Taylore (1981)

c. This is a potential limitation. We were required to recruit the subjects at the time of their genetic counseling and they then collected the blood sample with prenatal testing to limit venipunctures. As such, there is increased variability. While a limitation, it does permit increased generalizability as the findings are present without fasting the subjects.

d. The paragraph has been modified to deal with the confusing presentation

Reviewer #3 Barbara Hales

1. Thank-you for the encouraging comments

2.

a. The demographics have been corroborated with Table 1. The collection period is also included

b. The limited statement of page 11 has been corrected

c. We are prepared to eliminate the Tables and use the text alone if the editor chooses to do so.

d. We have adjusted this comment on amniotic fluid as mentioned above.

e. Page 3: repetitious line eliminated

f. Page 4 line 14: text adjusted

g. Page 5 line 5: text adjusted

h. Page 5 line 7: text adjusted

i. Page 5 line 10: text adjusted

j. Page 8 lines 2-4: text adjusted

k. Page 16 line 4: text adjusted; amniotic fluid statement adjusted

l. Page 17 text adjusted

m. Page 20 Acknowledgements corrected