Reply to Victora et al.\textsuperscript{1,2}

Dear Editor:

In their letter regarding our recent publication (1), Victora et al. misquoted us and hence misrepresented the main message of our article. Nowhere did we make the unqualified statement that “HAD, rather than HAZ, should be used to describe and compare changes in height.” We were careful to specify throughout the article that height-for-age difference (HAD), rather than height-for-age \textit{z} score (HAZ), should be used to describe and compare changes in height as \textit{children} or \textit{populations age}. We showed that this conclusion is based on the statistical fact that the SD used to calculate HAZ is cross-sectional in nature and increases with age, and thus HAZ should not be used to make claims about changes in height (or linear growth deficit) as \textit{children} or \textit{populations age}. Our analysis led to the important new conclusion that growth continues to falter after 24 mo of age in poor environments. We emphasized that our findings support the current global programmatic momentum to focus on the first 1000 d, but also call for research to better understand the dynamics and timing of linear growth faltering and to identify valid indicators to measure it. The potential to improve growth beyond 2 y of age needs to be tested, and the effectiveness of different packages of interventions to do so evaluated. We highlighted that these studies should assess whether improvements in growth after 2 y of age lead to meaningful changes in the functional consequences of undernutrition, and whether these interventions may contribute to changing the risk of chronic diseases.

Jef L. Leroy\textsuperscript{*}

Marie Ruel

International Food Policy Research Institute

Poverty, Health, and Nutrition Division

Washington, DC

Jean-Pierre Habicht

Division of Nutritional Sciences

Cornell University

Ithaca, NY

Edward A. Frongillo

Arnold School of Public Health

University of South Carolina

Columbia, SC

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\textsuperscript{*} To whom correspondence should be addressed. E-mail: j.leroy@cgiar.org.

Reference


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