

READER'S FORUM

Improved periviability in Japan and dilemmas for non-communicable diseases in the COVID-19 era

To the Editor,

In reference to my commentary,¹ Kono et al.² correctly distinguish between improvements in mortality and morbidity and lack of significant improvement in cognitive delay among 3-year-old survivors, born at 22 gestational weeks and actively resuscitated during 2003–2012 in Japan. This clarification is well taken.

However, the aim of the commentary was to address the possible perspective of non-communicable diseases in surviving perivable infants in the COVID-19 era. These infants, in addition to extreme prematurity, implicated—to a greater or lesser extent—in neurodevelopmental problems, face several adverse conditions related to their small intrauterine growth, delivery mode, nutrition and treatment in the neonatal intensive care unit and beyond, impacting, among others, their gut microbiome. Risks for non-communicable diseases later in life have been associated with unfavourable perinatal factors.³ Moreover, whether SARS-CoV-2 causes more damage to utmost immature tissues/organs is currently unknown.

Thus, dilemmas for active resuscitation of neonates born at 22 gestational weeks particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic and before establishing herd immunity through extensive vaccination also of pregnant women may not be considered totally unjustified.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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