Reviewer's report

Title: Delay to celiac disease diagnosis and its implications for health-related quality of life

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Reviewer: Jeremy Woodward

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This is a large study that identified a significant delay in time from the onset of symptoms in coeliac disease to the diagnosis of the condition. By demonstrating an improvement in health-related quality of life after diagnosis and institution of treatment, a preventable burden of ill health has been identified. The study is well designed and executed with the authors aware of the major limitations of the work. Potential sources of bias include the difficulty in recall of symptoms prior to diagnosis - in some cases very many years prior to the study questionnaire being sent. Whilst the authors suggest that recall bias is likely to underestimate the symptoms, the opposite may in fact be the case given the likelihood of positive reinforcement by health professionals encouraging dietary compliance, and membership of a patient group. There is an unfortunate but unavoidable response bias as well that probably explains the high rate of dietary compliance (96%) of the 66% that did respond. This data does not support the idea of mass screening for coeliac disease, but is further support for a low threshold in testing for the condition in the presence of symptoms. In this regard a potential opportunity has been missed by the investigators in determining which type of symptoms were predominantly experienced by patients and whether this had any impact on the delay in diagnosis. I would find figure 1 easier to understand with the addition of the words 'prior to diagnosis' after 'duration of symptoms' on the abscissa label.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests