Reviewer’s report

Title: Dietary intakes in subjects with irritable bowel syndrome

Version: 1 Date: 13 July 2010

Reviewer: Per G Farup

Reviewer’s report:

The paper describes the diet in subjects with IBS. It is correct that relatively few studies have undertaken dietary assessments in this group of patients, at least concerning micronutrients. The paper is well written and easy to read.

Some revisions that should be clarified:

The introduction is long and detailed, the information given is well known for readers of gastroenterological journals. The introduction would have been more suitable in a nutritional journal read by nutritionists. I recommend a shortening.

The methods are well described.

The “results” section needs a revision. The text uses the words: similar, below, exceed, far exceed, higher, lower etc. I want to know if the differences were statistically significant. In more detail – on page 6: Only male subjects showed a significant difference in BMI across IBS subtypes (p=0.036, data not shown). I find the data in table 1.

Table 1 is ok. Table 2 is a very detailed description of the dietary intake divided between sex and IBS-subgroups. It might be ok, but if possible, try to simplify it. And make it clear also in the legend to the table that there were no statistically significant differences between the groups.

Figure 1 is not one figure but 16, and figure 2 is 10 figures. I do not recommend publication of these figures. Except for the reference values (RNI and NDNS), the results in the figures are also given in table 2, the only difference is that in table 2 the results are given as mean with SD and in the figures as median with percentiles. If the authors want to refer to RNI and NDNS for energy, macro- and micronutrients, fruit and vegetables dived into groups for sex and IBS subtypes, please find another way to do it – probably a table. More important for me is to know if the intake is statistically significantly above or below the RNI and NDNS. The most important information is probably the proportion of subjects below the recommended limits and therefore in danger of deficiency disorders, which is not mentioned at all.

I also lack information about the relation between the diet and comorbidity (e.g., psychiatric disorders), food intolerance, degree of symptoms, ethnicity, etc. The paper mentions trigger foods, have trigger food (like wheat and lactose) been registered and how did trigger food influence the diet? I hope/expect that some of this information could be added.
Figure 2 is not mentioned in the text, and abbreviations (like RNI) should be explained before taken into use.

The discussion has to be revised based on the new way of presenting the results.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**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.