Reviewer's report

Title: Effectiveness of oral nutritional supplementation for older women after a fracture: a randomized controlled pilot study

Version: 3 Date: 27 February 2011

Reviewer: Maria Teresa Vidán

Reviewer's report:

Review of the revised manuscript:
• The authors do not have sufficient information to respond some of the mayor concerns related to the study, such as the power calculations to estimate the sample size required to find differences and the quality control of the adherence to the intervention. Nevertheless, they acknowledge these aspects as important limitations and they have change the conclusion in the revised manuscript as suggested. They state now that no conclusions about the efficacy or effectiveness of this intervention can be drawn from the study.

• Minor essential revisions:
  • Remove “rigorously designed” from the first paragraph in the abstract.
  • The authors consider important to compare the results in the intervention and control group even if the sample size of the pilot study is small. For that, I would suggest to show in Table 2 the average change with respect to baseline in all variables and the results of paired test, instead of the mean of the results at different moments of follow-up, and to discuss the results accordingly.
  • It would be also interesting to show the number of patients that do not lose weight (if any) in both groups and the number that increase albumin levels and show improvement in the Barthel score.
  • In the fourth paragraph of the results section the last sentence describes Table 3. There is no table 3 in the manuscript, please correct this mistake.
  • In the fifth paragraph of the results, it is mentioned that the “n” after 4 months is 33. This figure seems to be wrong as the initial n included in the intervention group was 27.
  • The seventh paragraph of the results describing the multiple regression analysis could be removed because it does not add relevant information and it is not correct to include so many independent variables in the regression model with such a small sample of events (as a general rule, it is acceptable to include one variable in the model per each ten events). The corresponding sentence in the Methods (statistical analysis) should be removed also.
  • In the discussion section, the last sentence of the paragraph six “It is likely that due….” Is not coherent in that context. Please clarify or remove it.
  • Discussion, paragraph 7: the sentence: “we found that total length of hospital
stay also had a positive effect on serum albumin after fourth months” is not based on data about albumin results after 4 months available for the reader in the text or in Table 2. Please add this information or remove the sentence.

Discretionary revisions:
Add in the last sentence of the conclusions: Further randomized studies appropriately sized and with rigorous controls of the intervention are needed.

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