Reviewer's report

Title: Dietary Fiber Showed no Preventive Effect from Colon and Rectal Cancers in Japanese with Low Fat Intake

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Reviewer: Prof Lynnette Robin Ferguson

Level of interest: A paper of limited interest

Advice on publication: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until I see revised version

This paper follows from an American report that suggested no protective effect of dietary fibre against colorectal cancer in a sizable study cohort of health professionals. Although it has a large amount of data, it simply uses a geographic comparison to associate dietary fibre intake with deaths from colon and rectal cancers between 1995 and 1997 in the 23 target prefectures. The authors conclude that dietary fiber showed no preventive effect in these Japanese people.
The methodology is adequate and the number of subjects included strengthens the study. However, such an approach is notoriously insensitive to effects, since different prefectures would differ in more ways than just their dietary fibre content. Thus, while the paper is generally adequate, I believe that the claims of significance of the study should be played down somewhat. The title implies that they have directly measured the effects of dietary fiber on these cancers, while in fact the authors can only demonstrate a correlation.
Additionally, the English requires some improvement
Specific points:
I was disappointed that the authors have not recognised the enormous controversy that the Fuchs paper generated. Several reasons have been given, especially in the correspondence in the same journal over following months. Would these same criticisms be applicable to the authors own study?
I don't believe that the prosky method is generally accepted for dietary fiber analysis. There would be
virtue in having other analyses and breaking down the dietary fibre into different types.

**Competing interests:**

None declared.