Author's response to reviews

Title: Healthy lifestyle and risk of breast cancer for indigenous and non-indigenous women in New Zealand: a case control study

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editors,

Please find enclosed our revised manuscript entitled “Healthy lifestyle and risk of breast cancer for indigenous and non-indigenous women in New Zealand: a case control study”.

Please see our response to the concerns detailed below:

- The limitation associated with the small number of Māori women has been more overtly acknowledged, and less emphasis has been placed on the results. The conclusion has been moderated and the need for further research in this area has also been stated.
- The reviewer is concerned about the few Maori cases in the least deprived group. This is fully expected, given the distribution of deprivation in the Maori population. As all our results are stratified by ethnicity, we do not see that this is an important limitation to the results.
- Further explanation/justification for the scoring system has been provided, and included in Table 1. The index components were all considered to be indicators of healthy living rather than specific risk factors for breast cancer, which is why we gave equal weight to each of the dietary components, as well as the non-dietary components. Since the recommendation for the intake of fruit and vegetables is combined (i.e. five servings per day), we decided to combine these in one component of the score. The scoring system of 0, 0.5, 1 has been previously used (e.g. Romaguera et al: Is concordance with World Cancer Research Fund/American Institute for Cancer Research guidelines for cancer prevention related to subsequent risk of cancer? Results from the EPIC study. Am J Clin Nutr. 2012 Jul;96(1):150-63).
- We would also like to thank the Editor for noting the error in the abstract results section, and this has now been corrected.
- The reviewer’s comment regarding screening is correct, and important, but not of direct relevance to the impact of the lifestyle behaviours that we are investigating, so we have not included in this version of the paper. If the editors request, we would be happy to add a sentence or two to the discussion.

We look forward to hearing your decision regarding this manuscript.

Yours sincerely,

Fiona McKenzie