Reviewer's report

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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Reviewer: Maureen Murtaugh

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Although the authors identify that the scale is limited in scope, some behaviors may be related and that it may be insensitive, diet gets 5 (or 6 if you include alcohol) of the 10 points. It would take some lengthy discussion to defend this approach when there are several dietary quality scores that have been devised to quantify risk. There isn’t any reason that a dietary score couldn’t be 0-10 with all 5 of the factors and then each of the other factors 0, 5 and 10 as well. As well, the choice of cream and cheese along with white mean, fish and red meat, but collapsing fruits and vegetables into one score is puzzling. Further rationale for the score being meaningful as is would be compulsory.

Another piece of the picture that is missing is screening. One would venture to guess that the rates of screening are different among Maori and non-Maori women. This particular behavior is also of interest related to breast cancer detection.

Response rate: 57% in non-Maori/non-Pacific women and 38% in Maori.

I applaud the adjustment for deprivation index, although I am concerned that there is no mathematical way to overcome the difference statistically when only 10% of the Maori cases come from the least deprived group.

The results are overstated and this score appears to have little potential impact. Calling an association with a confidence interval extending to 0.94 moderate is overstating the results. As well writing that there is a reduction, but that it doesn’t reach statistical significance is overstating the results.

Level of interest: An article of insufficient interest to warrant publication in a scientific/medical journal

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.