Author's response to reviews

Title: The COLON study: Colorectal cancer: Longitudinal, Observational study on Nutritional and lifestyle factors that influence colorectal tumour recurrence, survival and quality of life

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Version: 2
Date: 21 May 2014

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

Thank you for considering our study protocol entitled: “The COLON study: Colorectal cancer: Longitudinal, Observational study on Nutritional and lifestyle factors that influence colorectal tumour recurrence, survival and quality of life” for publication in BMC Cancer.

In this rebuttal, we provide a point-by-point reply to the questions raised by the Editorial Office.

Would there be additional queries, we will promptly respond to them.

Regards on behalf of all authors,

Renate Winkels

Overview of the comments raised, followed by our responses.

1) Many thanks for providing documentation of funding and ethical approval. Please remove the additional files, as these are no longer needed.

REPLY: documents have been removed

2) Please clarify funding of your study: could you please clarify which funding bodies have peer reviewed the study protocol and provide proof of this, with English translation if possible. Please attach these to an email rather than including them as additional files with the manuscript.

REPLY: The COLON study is sponsored by WCRF-NL&WCRF International, by Alpe d'Huzes/Dutch Cancer Society, and by ERA-NET. The review procedures of the funding bodies are shortly described below. Full explanation of the review procedures can be found in the attachments, which will be sent to the following email-address BMCSeriesEditorial@biomedcentral.com on the 21st of May, 2014.

WCRF-NL/WCRF International: a full description of the review process can be found in the Grant Application Package of WCRF that is attached. Details of the review process of WCRF can be found on page 12 of the Grant Application Package. In short, the review process of WCRF is led by WCRF Grant Panel, comprising of senior scientists in the field of nutrition, physical activity, body fatness and cancer. Each application is assigned two or more external peer reviewers, who provide a written review. Peer reviewer suggestions for each application are obtained from the Panel, from the applicants (providing there is no conflict of interest) and from those who have been suggested but are unable to review the application. The Panel members review the applications prior to the Panel meeting, using the external peer reviews to assist them in judging the scientific merit of the proposals.

Alpe d’Huzes/Dutch Cancer Society: the review process of Alpe d’Huzes/Dutch Cancer Society is briefly described at the following website: http://www.kwf.nl/english/Pages/Financing-research.aspx. A full description of the review process in Dutch is attached. The procedure is described at page 6. A brief translation of the review process is as follows. Project proposals will first be pre-reviewed by the Scientific Council of the Dutch Cancer Society. Projects that are selected to be suitable for external review will be sent to at least two independent reviewers within the field of research. These reviewers will be asked to judge the scientific merits, scientific standing of principal investigator and research group, whether the number of personnel requested is appropriate, whether the project can be completed in the proposed time and to give an overall judgement. Reviewers will remain anonymous. The project proposals will be sent to them confidentially. The judgements of the reviewers are the basis of the final judgment of the Scientific Council of the Dutch Cancer Society.

ERA-NET: the review process of ERA-NET can be found in the attachment, page 16. In short, the review process of ERA-NET is as follows: each full proposal will be sent to at least two external reviewers who fit the profile of the application and to the two Scientific Evaluation Committee (SEC) members who had reviewed the corresponding pre-proposal. The external reviewers and the SEC members will independently assess the full proposal according to the evaluation criteria above mentioned, and will deliver their evaluation reports to the Joint Call Secretariat. The Secretariat will send the external
reviewers’ evaluation reports to the SEC members in preparation of the second SEC meeting. During the second SEC meeting, the SEC member selected as rapporteur for each full proposal will present a summary of all the corresponding individual evaluation reports. The SEC members, after consideration of the individual evaluation results, will compile a ranking list of the full proposals recommended for funding.

3) Competing interests. Please be advised that manuscripts must include a ‘Competing interests’ section. This should be placed after the Conclusions/Abbreviations. If there are none to declare, please include the statement “The authors declare that they have no competing interests.” Please consider the following questions and include an appropriate declaration of competing interests in your manuscript:

REPLY: We added the statement “The authors declare that they have no competing interests.” to our manuscript.

3) Authors’ Contributions

REPLY: We added the following statement to our manuscript.

“All authors contributed to the conception and design of the study. RW drafted the manuscript, all authors critically read and revised the manuscript. All authors approved the final version of the manuscript.”

5) Acknowledgements

REPLY: We included the following acknowledgements:

“The authors would like to thank the following hospitals for their involvement in recruitment for the COLON study: Hospital Gelderse Vallei, Ede, Dr Ph. M. Kruyt; UMC St Radboud, Nijmegen, Prof Dr J. H. W. de Wilt, Dr H. W. M. van Laarhoven; Slingeland Ziekenhuis, Doetinchem, Dr P.C. van de Meeberg; Canisius Wilhelmina Ziekenhuis, Nijmegen, Dr. B. Hansson; Ziekenhuis Rijnstate, Arnhem, Dr. E.J. Spillenaar-Bilgen; Gelre ziekenhuis Apeldoorn, Apeldoorn, Dr. P. van Duijvendijk, Dr W. Erkelens; Ziekenhuis Bernhoven, Oss, Dr. B. van Balkom; Isala Klinieken, Zwolle, Dr. J.C. de Graaf; Ziekenhuisgroep Twente, Almelo, Dr. E.A. Kouwenhoven; Martini Ziekenhuis, Groningen, Dr. H. van der Heide; Admiraal De Ruyter Ziekenhuis, Goes/Vlissingen, Dr. H.K. van Halteren. This project is sponsored by Wereld Kanker Onderzoek Fonds (WCRF-NL) & World Cancer Research Fund International (WCRF International); Alpe d’Huzes/Dutch Cancer Society (UM 2012-5653, UW 2013-5927); and ERA-NET on Translational Cancer Research (TRANSCAN: CANCER12-028 - CRC-Metabolome). Sponsors were not involved in the study design nor will they be in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data, or in the publications that will result from this study.”