Reviewer's report

Title: Adolescent Nutritional Awareness and Use of Food Labels: Results from the National Nutrition Health and Examination Survey

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Reviewer: Anke Oenema

Reviewer's report:

This paper reports on a cross-sectional study on awareness of federal nutrition programs and guidelines, and frequency of use of the nutrition facts panels on products among adolescents. In addition the association with use of nutrition facts labels and dietary intake and BMI is examined. The topic of study is very relevant, since adolescents are becoming more independent in making their own food choices. It is then important that they are informed well about healthy foods and can use the available tools to make healthy choices. A strength of the study are that it involves a large sample of adolescents between 16 and 19 years old. The study is pretty straightforward and generally clearly reported.

The manuscript gives rise to some questions.

Major compulsory revisions

Methods section
- The description of the analyses is unclear. The authors state that chi square tests and t-tests were used to assess differences in means, but what were groups that were compared?
- The analyses relating the use of nutrition facts labels with BMI are very basic. Why were only univariate regression analyses performed? Are there no potential confounding factors that need to be adjusted for and would it not be more likely that the relation between nutrition panel reading behaviour and BMI is mediated through dietary intake? The analyses would become stronger and more meaningful if more sophisticated analyses were conducted.
- How was awareness of the nutrition program assessed and how was use of the nutrition facts panel assessed? How valid and reliable were the instruments that were used to assess these variables? How valid and reliable are the measures that were used? If adolescents never check the nutrition information on packages, how valid and reliable are the answers to the questions that they had to complete about these topics?
- How was BMI measured?
- Was dietary behaviour measured? And how was the relation of awareness of the nutrition programs and reading of the nutrition facts panels associated with dietary intake? Behaviour could be a mediator in the relation between program awareness and nutrition facts information and BMI. A rationale for assessing a direct association between nutrition program awareness and use of nutrition
panel information is required.

Results section
- In the results section the authors report on some significant associations between nutrition label reading behaviour and risk for BMI. However, a lot of tests were performed to examine the association between program awareness and reading of specific information on the nutrition panels and BMI. Thus, some of the associations that are reported could be due to chance. The authors should correct for multiple testing to interpret the findings.

Minor essential revisions
There are quite some spelling errors and incomplete words in the tekst.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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.