Reviewer's report

Title: A family-based education programme for obesity: a three-year study.

Version: 5 Date: 13 April 2007

Reviewer: Sandra Plachta-Danielzik

Reviewer's report:

General
The manuscript of Dr. Tanas et al contains an interesting topic but I have some concerns.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

- The authors used as outcome parameter BMI% and BMI z-score. Both parameters indicate the variation of a BMI value from the 50th percentile (or mean). The z-score is the more common parameter and should be used. In addition the use of BMI-SDS would be better than BMI z-score because the BMI in children is not normal distributed.

- why do the authors used two different reference databases for BMI: Luciano et al. to calculate z-score and %BMI and Cole et al. for the obesity degrees? To compare z-score values and the prevalence of overweight the same reference database should be used.

- changes in z-score should be always given in the results section.

- the scoring of outcome is unclear: z-BMI <85th percentile: according to which reference?

- the authors showed changes in BMI z-score and changes in BMI. Due to the high range in age of the children (and the different development of BMI during childhood) changes of BMI are misleading. Figure 1b and 2b should be skipped.

- The authors matched the control group according to age, gender and follow-up. It would be important to match for BMI, socio-economic status and weight status of the parents. These are the main determinants of childhood overweight and additionally influence the success of an intervention.

- why did the authors write "he/she" when speaking about the physician. They wrote that it was only one person (?). Or was the TEP performed by several physicians? Then a cluster effect have to be proven.

- Not all children were measured at follow up. How many self-reported values were included? To which group did they belong?

- Drop out rate as well as a drop out analysis are missing.

- As stated in the discussion girls had a higher prevalence of negative results than boys. This is not given in the results section (e.g. in table 1 and 2).

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

- table 2 should include number of children changing their obesity degree. Normal weight is missing. In TEP numbers of baseline and follow up are not the same (?).

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

- Figure 2 is cited before fig. 1b is cited.
What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.