Reviewer’s report

Title: Food Policies for Mental Health

Version: Date: 30 January 2014

Reviewer: Martha Payne

Reviewer’s report:

This commentary presents a relatively novel suggestion to include and address mental disorders within global health nutrition policy aimed at non-communicable disease prevention. This opinion piece may be a useful contribution on how to maximize impact of public health nutrition policy. However, the article is superficial, and lacks the focus and evidence base necessary to make it a persuasive argument.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Improve clarity and logical flow of article. Provide greater evidence for stated opinions.

The article appears to have two foci – 1. justifying the inclusion of mental disorders with other non-communicable diseases, and 2. proposing that global nutrition policies address mental disorders. While the first point seems obvious, the justification provided is inadequate – it would be helpful to provide some of the ‘clear and consistent evidence’ referenced in the Background section. A major justification that is not highlighted is the overlap between physical and mental illnesses (e.g., heart disease increases risk of late-life depression, and depression increases mortality among those with an MI). Regarding the second point (food policy), which seems to be primary focus of paper (based on title), it is not clear if the authors are arguing for inclusion of mental disorders as a primary target of nutrition policy or rather that mental disorders should simply be examined as potential outcomes of interest. In either case, a more thorough justification for the link between diet and mental disorders is warranted, as the evidence base in this area is far inferior for that for many physical illnesses (e.g., diabetes), and is certainly less well-known.

2. Revise abstract to bring it in line with rest of article. Abstract does not specifically mention either diet or nutrition, nor does it link these factors with mental health. Depression and dementia are highlighted in abstract but rest of article does not provide much discussion of these two conditions and their relationship with nutrition.

3. Are specific nutrition policies being recommended for the prevention of mental disorders (e.g., promotion of Mediterranean diet)?

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Review grammar and language.
2. Clarify the bi-directional relationship between physical and mental non-communicable diseases.

Discretionary Revisions
1. Suggest additional discussion of the relationship between obesity and mental disorders, including depression, as this is one of the most solid areas of nutrition-mental health research.

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