Author's response to reviews

Title: Effect of an individually tailored one-year energy balance programme on abdominal fat and body weight in recent retirees: a cluster randomised controlled trial

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Author's response to reviews: see over
The Hague, January 11th 2010

Dear editors,

Herewith we present our second response to the additional comments and requests for clarification that were raised by the two referees on the manuscript entitled ‘Effect of an individually tailored one-year energy balance programme on abdominal fat and body weight in recent retirees: a cluster randomised controlled trial’ offered for publication in BMC Public Health.

We are glad that the reviewers were so kind to study the manuscript again and address our responses and we thank them for their additional comments. Our responses are presented point-by-point below and completions and alterations in the manuscript are depicted in bold.

We believe that we have fulfilled all points of concern that were raised by the two reviewers and therefore sincerely hope that the editorial board will decide to accept this paper for publication in the BMC Public Health.

Yours sincerely, on behalf of all authors,

Andrea Werkman, MSc
Jantine Schuit, PhD

For your information: the study was performed while AW was affiliated with the Wageningen University. Currently she is working at the Netherland Nutrition Centre.
Comments of reviewer #1 and our responses:

1. OK, although I think it is a little confusing to see women in Fig 1, but nowhere else  
   **Response:** A note has been added to the caption of Figure 1 to explain the fact that women are shown in the figure but results are not presented in the paper (see page 29).

2. OK.
3. OK.
4. OK.
5. Maybe there was some problem uploading the list because I could not find it. If the editor has seen a complete list, and is satisfied that all 22 items are included in the manuscript, there is no need for me to perform another re-review.  
   **Response:** by mistake the CONSORT list was not uploaded with the revision. This time the list has will be uploaded.

6. OK.
7. OK.
8. OK.
9. Please explain this figure a little more in the figure caption, for example what is +2 w: toolbox?  
   **Response:** A more specific caption has been added to the manuscript at page 29.

10. OK.

11. There is still some vague language around, for example the last sentence in the first para of the Discussion: "Secondary analysis..."  
   **Response:** We have checked the manuscript and more specifically the Discussion section and edited the text. For this particular issue see page 17.

12. OK.
13. OK.
14. OK.

Comments of reviewer #2 and our responses:

1- The physical activity questionnaire that has been used was developed for use in an older population (65 and older) that the one enrolled into the study. I would like the authors to comment on this.  
   **Response:** We have added this to the Methods section on page 11 and the Discussion section on page 19.

2- The methods section and figure 2 now mention that the intervention is of 12 months duration. If the purpose of the second year was simply to establish sustainability, please explain how were the participants refrained from using the modules after the first year.
**Response:** During the second year no further content was added to the website, no new modules were sent out and no specific information was provided. However, participants of the intervention group were free to (re)use the modules and participants were not actively refrained from the intervention. Moreover, the Newsletters were distributed but only contained general information. This is added to the caption of Figure 2, see page 29.

3- As per my previous review the assessment of program utilization needs to be further clarified. I’ve only found mention of a self reported questionnaire regarding utilization of module 1 in the text.  
**Response:** We have added this to the Methods section on page 9/10 and for clarity the results are presented in the first paragraph of the Results section, page 15.

4- As per my previous review I don’t think the results at 24 months have been adequately addressed in the Discussion section.  
**Response:** A more extensive explanation of this issue has been added to the Discussion on page 17 at the end of the first paragraph.

5- As per my previous review the authors need to discuss what they are planning to do with the intervention program in the future. I suggest they expand their comment that the results can be used to improve the intervention modules.  
**Response:** The Netherlands Heart Foundation sponsored the study and is therefore the owner of the intervention. Up to now it is not decided how they will proceed with this intervention and whether they decide to implement (parts of ) the intervention among retirees in the Netherlands. See page 21, final sentence of the Discussion.

6- As per my previous review the authors need to acknowledge as a limitation the small number of female participants in their study.  
**Response:** This limitation is mentioned in the discussion as well at page 19.