Reviewer's report

Title: Differences in school environment, school policy and actions regarding overweight prevention between Dutch schools. A nationwide survey.

Version: 1 Date: 28 May 2009

Reviewer: Eva Grammatikaki

Reviewer's report:

This is a very interesting paper describing a great effort in the Netherlands to assess the potential effect of school environment on obesity epidemic, examine existence or lack of school policy and actions on overweight prevention. It is generally well-written and presents data in a coherent way, however some revisions to the points mentioned below would further improve it.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1) The study aims to present a nationally representative picture of the obesogenity of the school environment (Introduction section). However, the authors have not presented the level of representativeness they have chosen and whether the final sample was actually representative. For example, if school type was the designated level of representativeness, they could add a comment in the results section (Reasons for non-response and study characteristics) on whether the presence of the different types of schools in the study is similar to that in the whole country.

2) I noticed that although in table 5, almost 15% of schools had placed a water cooler as part of the actions taken to stimulate healthy eating behaviour, only 10% of schools reported having water coolers at school. Does this mean that the actions taken by the schools were not necessarily in progress at the time of data collection? What was the time span that the questions referred to? Please clarify this in the text.

Minor Essential Revisions

1) Page 6, paragraph 1, line 4: please change “brakes” to “breaks”
2) Page 8, School environment section, line 4: change to “students regularly go”
3) Page 14, paragraph 2, lines 5 and 6: change “vocation” to “vocational”
4) Page 15, paragraph 2, line 6: change “energy dens” to “energy dense”
5) Page 17, lines 8 and 9: change “vocation” to “vocational”
6) Table 1: Correct sentence to “how many hours of physical activity education do the children receive per week?”
7) Table 1: Correct sentence to “Did your school participate in one of the following national projects in the last two years?”
8) Table 5: please change “brakes” to “breaks”
Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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