Reviewer’s report

Title: Obese adults attitudes towards individual and population based interventions for obesity: A qualitative community study

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Reviewer: Helen Mavoa

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This is an important study providing opinions and attitudes of a middle class highly educated sample of primarily women who were obese.

Major compulsory revisions

I strongly recommend that the authors stress in the conclusion that the sample is middle class, highly educated and predominantly female. This is not a representative sample of obese adults, given that there is a higher prevalence of obesity in low- versus high-SES groups and that more males are obese than females (Australian Bureau of Statistics. National Health Survey: Summary of Results, 2007-2008). Neither does the sample represent the multi-ethnic nature of the Australian population. The attempt to gain a representative community sample may have been unsuccessful because much of the recruitment processes targeted workplaces and/or universities, with community-based recruitment occurring later in the study. More than 80% of the men 30/36 were recruited from either universities or workplaces (see Stream 5 of recruitment strategy). Attaining a sample of lower SES participants and from different ethnicities requires different recruiting strategies from those used for the current study (especially workplace, hospital and university mailing lists and gymnasiums).

Notwithstanding these limitations, the study provides important information on the relatively high value placed on public health campaigns that promote a healthy lifestyle versus commercial diets, health promotion campaigns and other individual weight-loss strategies. However, the opinions of these participants represent a highly educated section of the population and cannot necessarily be generalised to other sectors of the population; we would expect different responses from obese individuals who had more limited incomes and different educational and/or cultural experiences. A caveat should be placed on recommendations arising from this paper, given the specific nature of the sample.