Reviewer’s report

Title: Association of Self perception of weight with actual weight in adults presenting to primary care clinics in Pakistan: a cross sectional study

Version: 3 Date: 7 January 2011

Reviewer: Sara Kirk

Reviewer’s report:

The authors have made a number of amendments to the paper, which is now more readable. There are still numerous typographical errors and I have a few queries regarding the details that have been added, which I would consider minor essential revisions.

1. A section has been inserted regarding ethics. This is in a different font and line spacing, which should be corrected. With this addition, the further reference to ethics in the section on procedure is redundant and should be deleted. The authors also state that “the questionnaires were anonymous and did not ask any personal information”, however weight, height, age and sex are all personal information so this latter part of the sentence should be removed.

2. In the inserted section on the dependent variable, the authors have responded to my earlier concern about the use of the word “slim” and replaced this with the word “thin” but I am concerned that this is not the word that was actually used in the interviews. Can the authors confirm the actual meaning of the word used in the questionnaire? Was it thin or slim? It is not appropriate to change the meaning if this is what was used, but given that the questionnaire was administered in Urdu, it may be that the meanings are the same when translated into English.

3. The authors state that “Attitude towards weight was assessed by the following question: What do you feel about your weight? A) happy, b) unhappy or c) don’t think about it”. I suggest removing the word attitude since this has clear definitions that may not fit this actual question, which is more about feelings. I suggest rephrasing as “participants were asked to describe how they felt about their weight using the following descriptors; A) happy, b) unhappy or c) don’t think about it”.

4. In the discussion, the authors say “…and thus contribute to health problems associated with obesity due to a failure to respond…” What they fail to respond to needs clarifying – health professional advice to lose weight?

5. Also in the discussion, the last section before limitations, the authors should delete the last sentence “This makes it imperative that overweight and obese individuals be made aware of their weight status” as it is repetitive.

6. Typographical errors are as follows, edited to the correct convention (note –
the lack of page/line numbers made this a difficult task):

Introduction:
The transtheoretical model of behavior change suggests that people…

…it is important to understand if there are problems with weight perception as observed globally and what are the factors that affect awareness of this in our population. We therefore aimed to investigate the perception of weight among adults attending primary care clinics and compare this with their weight categories based on BMI, particularly the underestimation of weight in overweight/obese individuals.

Methods:
A non-probability convenience sample was drawn from adult patients (defined as aged 18 years and above)

Participant demographics: This consisted of…

Presence of co-morbid conditions: Participants were asked if they were known to have diabetes,…

Weight related assessment: Participants were asked if they had checked their weight in the last two years…

For model building, using misperception of weight as a dependent variable, univariate analysis was carried out to look for any association with independent variables

In statistical analysis - presence of co-morbid conditions

Results:
Almost two thirds of the participants (64%) reported not having received counseling about their weight by a health professional.

A large proportion (73%) of obese individuals did not perceive themselves as obese, although half of them thought they may be overweight

In the multivariable model, almost three quarters of people aged > 40 years misperceived their weight compared with half of people < 40 years, therefore older people were twice as likely to misperceive their weight than younger people.

Males were 3.3 times less likely to consider themselves as overweight/obese as compared to females.

Also, people who were happy with their current weight were almost six times less likely to perceive themselves as overweight or obese. Not knowing ones’s ideal weight was also twice as likely to result in misperception in the multivariable model.
Discussion:

…a substantial proportion of individuals in overweight and obese categories inaccurately classified their weight status.

Almost half of the overweight and most (73%) of the obese participants misperceived their weight status, although two thirds of the obese participants did consider themselves to be overweight.

Being happy or not thinking about their weight was most strongly associated with weight Misperception, with the majority (81%) of these participants tending to misperceive

This is also true in South Asian cultures, putting them at risk of excessive weight gain and associated health risks. (then remove the next sentence).

… a large proportion of men (84%) as opposed to women did not consider themselves to be obese (52%). This gender difference is noted in several previous studies.

those most likely to misperceive their overweight status were adults aged 40 years and over...

Almost two thirds of those who reported receiving advice about their weight misperceived, compared to 70% of the people who reported not receiving advice.

Similar phenomena have been observed...

Limitations:

…and could influence perception independently.

Conclusion:

Accurate perception is critical for individuals to be receptive to messages regarding weight maintenance or weight loss goals. Therefore educating patients about healthy weights and correct weight perception may be an important initial step towards addressing the issue of obesity.

7. This is not an exhaustive list and I strongly encourage the authors to re-check the manuscript for other errors.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published
Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests