Reviewer’s report

Title: Attitudes towards and Perception of Overweight and Obesity in the Public Opinion: a systematic review

Version: 1 Date: 13 May 2011

Reviewer: Shelly Russell-Mayhew

Reviewer’s report:

I was pleased to have the opportunity to review this interesting and timely article. I have divided my comments into the requested sections for the authors’ consideration. I hope this review is helpful in the revision process.

Major Compulsory Revisions

More background is needed to guide the reader. The statement on page 8 “This study aimed at reviewing prevalence of stigmatizing attitudes, casual attribution of obesity of the lay public and its predictors, as well as determinants of prevention support” was the first time the objective of the study was clearly laid out. This statement needs to be moved to the front of the paper.

Once a clear statement is in place, the background needs to create the rationale for the importance of these three aims. The first paragraph of the paper introduces us to obesity and weight discrimination. I propose that a short section/paragraph be added about ‘stigmatization’, define it, and tell us why it is important/relevant to the area of study. Then the paragraph on the theories can follow but I would also recommend that the discussion about causal attribution theory be made stronger (i.e. a clear definition of this theory) and perhaps put this theory in a separate paragraph to conclude the background section.

The authors need to clearly state the research question(s). I think part of the lack of clarity about the paper is that there are no such questions clearly laid out for the reader. I assume from piecing together the work that these questions might read something like: 1. How do representative samples of the lay public perceive people with obesity/overweight status? (a) To what do they attribute obesity? (b) What types of intervention/prevention strategies are supported by the lay public?

I think this upfront work will help with clarity and support the interesting findings that come later in the paper.

One final compulsory revision is the second last sentence of the text on page 11 and 12. “Considering that most weight-loss interventions only yield a weight loss of about 10 percent (leaving many obese individuals still overweight),…” While I am sure not intended, one could read this to mean that a possible solution to weight bias/weight discrimination is for obese/overweight individuals to lose weight. A rewording of this sentence will add clarity.
Minor Essential Revisions

While I think the direction above will help clean up the paper, there are a number of areas that were confusing to me. For example, in the abstract, one sentence starts with “For all three components,...” but I am not clear as a reader what these components are. The use of the word ‘pandemic’ to describe obesity is a controversial one. The last sentence immediately before the methods section is unclear and needs to be reworded.

The front end of the paper (particularly the abstract) has a number of awkward sentences where I was uncertain of the authors meaning. I have attached some editing/sentence structure revisions with the review for the authors consideration.

Discretionary Revisions

While I did provide some editing in the beginning of the paper, the entire paper could use some tightening up for clarity.

Weight stigma, weight discrimination, weight bias, stigmatization are all used in the paper but without clear operational definitions.

On page 5 - take out 'from now on' at end of sentence
On page 6 - please report the % of shared variance to behavior (internal)
On page 7 - last full sentence on the page "Furthermore, a greater perceived significance of obesity,"... change the word 'of' to 'to' " for a solution to the obesity..."
On page 9 - restructure sentence "Further research on the perception of the lay public on the causes of obesity is therefore needed..."
Page 11 - you suddenly introduce the term ‘patients’ - this assumes that every obese person is a patient (or should be) - I recommend changing this to 'individual'
Page 11 - change interventional to intervention

**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 declar that I have no competing interests.