Reviewer's report

**Title:** A qualitative study of the determinants of dieting and non-dieting approaches in overweight/obese Australian adults

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 19 October 2012

**Reviewer:** Samantha Thomas

**Reviewer's report:**

This is an interesting and well written paper which explores how a 'non-dieting' approach to obesity may be employed in improving health outcomes. It is refreshing to see researchers looking at these new approaches, and I commend the authors and particularly the PhD student on this study and the paper.

I have some suggestions for improving this paper. The researchers have obviously collected rich qualitative data, and I hope the suggestions will help the researchers to strengthen this important piece of research, and to make the most of the narratives they have collected.

1. The background literature is somewhat brief, and reads more like a collection of statements. A more comprehensive background (with subheadings) would guide the reader through the complex range of perspectives/research associated with this area. Importantly this might seek to locate the literature within a public health or population health framework.

What have been some of the main arguments in including this within current approaches to obesity? There is some terrific research out there and would be well worth explaining to set the scene for your study. I think this is one of the key weaknesses of the paper - that there is limited discussion of the 'public health' application of the findings of this piece of research. Placing this within the background will allow you to link this back in with the discussion after your results.

Just a minor point - your statement "Australia’s obesity rates are among the highest in the world and have steadily risen during the past 30 years [2]" is not exactly true. Australia is one of the highest OECD countries. And rates of obesity (esp in kids) have plateaued according to some research)

2. The methods are very well described. A minor point. You say you used a semi-structured interview? How does this fit within a Grounded Theory framework? I suspect what you may have done for this study is drawn upon Grounded Theory concepts, rather than used it in its 'purist' form. This isn't problematic, but you might just like to clarify that to ensure criticism of the methods used.

3. The results section need the most work. At the moment there are a lot of quotes but you could do a lot more to describe/intepret the narratives. There are
a lot of 'one line' introductions to explain quite complex narratives, as well as generalisation (for example 'Attributions about dieting failure also emerged as a category which differentiated between the choice to diet or not diet') and I think these quotes deserve a much more detailed explanation in the text. It might be worth choosing a fewer number of quotes and fully explaining these, and linking them in with the appropriate theory (or alternatively explaining how these contribute to the theoretical model you are developing with your Grounded Theory approach).

4. The discussion might then look at explaining the theory to emerge from your data, but also how this links into public and population health policy and practice - so what are the implications of your data for public health?

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I have no competing interests to declare.