Author's response to reviews

Title: Adherence to a Mediterranean Diet in Morocco and its correlates: cross-sectional analysis of a sample of the adult Moroccan population.

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Reviewers,
Thank you for sending these comments. They are very useful and we have modified the manuscript according to the specific comments. Please find below our point by point response to the specific comments of the reviewers.

Reviewer: Christos Pitsavos
Reviewer's report:

1. The diet score used is not adequate to evaluate adherence to the Med diet pattern and has never been validated before

Answer: We agree with the reviewer. The simplified Mediterranean diet (MeDi) score used in the present study was an adaptation of previously described and widely used MeDi scores, to take into account the available data in our study. Thus, we labeled it as a simplified MDA score and we discussed this point as a limitation of this study in the “Discussion chapter” P12.

2. Stepwise data-driven procedures are usually not allowed for epidemiological or any other clinical investigations, since they do not account for the potential residual confounding effect

Answer: We agree with the reviewer. We rerun the analysis without any stepwise data-driven procedures. Thus, the final model was deleted and we presented only the results of the first model as recommended by the reviewer.

3. In a cross-sectional survey like the present, the relationships could be explained vice-versa ...i.e., smoking was inversely associated with MeDi or those who had good MeDi were less likely to smoke?

Answer: Since the association between smoking and MeDi adherence had disappeared in the first model, we deleted this sentence from the manuscript. Furthermore, the cross sectional design as limitation of this study has been discussed in “Discussion” Chapter P13 of the manuscript.

4. The literature review is very poor, and the authors should search for relevant papers in the area

Answer: We added more relevant papers in the manuscript which are highlighted in green color in “References” Chapter.
Reviewer: Charalambos Vlachopoulos

Reviewer's report:
The revised submission incorporates my recommendations and suggestions with regard to study methodology and design. The results are clear and interesting and overall the manuscript is well-written.

Response to General comments: Thank you for considering our manuscript as an article of importance. We are happy that the reviewer recognized that results are clear and interesting.

Specific comments:
However, I still think that the lack of information regarding traditional CVD risk factors, such as obesity, hypertension, diabetes mellitus and hypercholesterolaemia is a limitation of the study.

Answer: We agree with the reviewer and in the revised manuscript the required changes have been incorporated in “Discussion” Chapter P12.
Reviewer: Yian Gu

Response to General comments: Many thanks for understanding the importance of our research topic and the relevance of our article.

Specific comments:

I would suggest move the sentence “Individuals with at least one missing data in at least one component of MeDi adherence score (N= 677, 23.4% of the sample) were excluded from the computation of the score. The present study is thus based on 2214 individuals with complete dietary data.” on page 7 to somewhere around the sentence “Among the 2891, 2214 have answered all FFQ items which were used to calculate the Mediterranean Diet Adherence (MDA) score in this study.” in the first paragraph on page 9.

Answer: Agreed. The sentence is moved to the second paragraph as recommended.