Reviewer's report

Title: Children eat their school lunch too quickly: an exploratory study of the effect on food intake

Version: 2 Date: 4 October 2011

Reviewer: Cees de Graaf

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General comments.

This is an interesting/important paper with quite some implications for public health policy. I think that the conclusions that many children eat to quickly for lunch are justified. The high eating rate may put them on a risk for overeating. The paper makes a fair case for this statement.

The paper would improve with a better flow of the several subparts of the entire study. I get a bit confused with the different populations/substudies, and the numbers and instructions given to them. Maybe a figure with an overview of the different study populations and measurement would help.

Specific comments

Abstract

The flow of writing in the abstract could be better. More specific information of the numbers of children participating in the various subparts, and some numbers about rate of eating and total food intake may make the abstract more interesting.

Introduction

Ok.

Methods

Page 4, first paragraph.

To me this first paragraph is confusing. how many people/investigators recorded with a stopwatch? If you study 100 children, how can you do that? Do you many observers. It is written that boys came before girls, and therefore the first five girsl and the first five boys were first recorded. How does this relate to n of 100? How does the n of 100 relate to the 18 boys and and 12 boys. Why do you refer to the sample size of other studies here. That is not releveant here.

Why don’t you start with a subjects section for the different substudies, and include a table on this. There are two substudies, are there not? One study recorded eating time in a spontaneous situation, and in one other study eating rate was manipulated with the mandometer. In the second study there were 5 conditions, 1, unrestricted meal (is that the same as unrestrained in Table 2), 2.
school lunch (I did not see that mentioned in the methods section, when was this measured?), 3. increased, 4. unchanged, and 5. decreased. Were the subjects in both studies the same?

Were the manipulations on eating rate based on the individual curves? How can you that the time was manipulated?

What was the instruction to the subjects: eat until you are comfortably full?

Results

Separate sections for study 1 and 2 could be helpful.

Again, I am not sure where the school lunch condition came from. This plays an important role in the results.

Figure 2 is difficult to read/interpret. Is the intake in the unchanged condition set at 100%? There is still quite some variability around this value. How can intake be -150 %? Food intake can never be negative can it?

Discussion.

generally OK.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.