Reviewer’s report

Title: The 40-something randomized controlled trial to prevent weight gain in mid-age women

Version: 11 Date: 9 September 2013

Reviewer: Caroline Horwath

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"Thank you for clarifying the sample size/pilot study issue – the inconsistency in the manuscript has been resolved.

Thank you also for clarifying the nature of written advice provided to the control group. In the section of the manuscript describing the written advice to the control group, participants are described as receiving “written weight control goals and behaviour change strategies developed based on assessment results”. From this, it may be interpreted that they received material regarding behavioural strategies guiding them on how to implement recommendations such as ‘eat 2 serves of fruit each day’. However, the response to review indicates they merely received reiteration of the weight control messages. It would be helpful to clarify the wording in this section describing the Protocol Phase I.

Thanks for adding clarification re elements of SCT applied. Further information here would be valuable. For example, how did messages seek to build self-efficacy? I don’t see that clarified in the “Additional file 2”, but perhaps have missed it? Re the outcome expectations construct of SCT, it would be useful to know how the messages helped participants to increase their perceptions of positive outcomes of behaviour change, and reduce their perceptions of negative outcomes (eg such as expense, inconvenience etc). The added sentence seems to suggest that women were simply told that specific behaviours would lead to weight gain prevention: “Providing the women with the expected outcome of performing these behaviours (weight gain prevention) was designed to motivate them to change current behaviour”.

Self-efficacy is the confidence to perform a specific behaviour (rather than ‘belief in one’s ability to apply learned information’ – I’d recommend using the more specific wording)."