Reviewer’s report

Title: Socioeconomic status, financial hardship and measured obesity in older adults: A cross-sectional study of the EPIC-Norfolk cohort

Version: 1 Date: 30 August 2013

Reviewer: Virginia Quick

Reviewer’s report:

This is a well written and conceived study that has important implications for examining the role of socioeconomic factors as it relates to obesity among older adults. A few suggested revisions to help improve the manuscript are found below.

Minor Essential Revisions
1) In the first paragraph and last sentence of the Introduction, the word “understood” should be changed to “understand”.

2) Second paragraph and last sentence of the Introduction: Implying causality should be held with caution. The word “cause” in this sentence should be tempered and changed to “be related to” or “associated with”.

3) Third paragraph in Introduction: Can the authors please clarify what “differential impact of separate types” is referring too? In this same paragraph (last sentence) it is suggested the this sentence be revised for clarity to state the following: “Older adults with greater financial hardships may purchase less food and have lower weights due to fewer calories; however, they may also purchase cheaper foods high in energy density which could contribute to excess weight.”

4) Last paragraph, first sentence in Introduction: the word “hardship” should be plural (i.e., hardships) and the word “measured” should be changed to “measures”.

5) Last paragraph, last sentence in Introduction: I believe the authors hypothesized that the associations would remain “significant” after adjusting for conventional socio-economic status. Please confirm.

6) Data analysis (third paragraph): Was the food frequency questionnaire adapted from a previous validated measure? Please provide a reference as able.

7) Results (second paragraph under the “Financial hardship and odds of obesity” subheading): In the second to last sentence, I believe the authors meant to state that Model D in Tables 2 and 3 show associations between financial hardship and odds of “general and central obesity”. Please revise.

8) Second paragraph under the “Relationship to previous work” subheading: The first sentence is incomplete. Suggest adding the words “Our findings” at the start
of this sentence.

9) Web Appendix B: Remember tables should be able to stand on their own. Please indicate in a footnote how central and general obesity were measured.

10) Methods: The authors confirm that at entry, over-50s were similar to the total cohort in terms of health behaviours and other socio-demographic factors. However, there is no mention as to whether the over-50s data analytic sample (n=10,137) were different in terms of health behaviours and socio-demographic characteristics from the non-completers (i.e., over-50s missing data on financial hardships questions and follow-up anthropometric data).

11) Measures (first paragraph): Please provide a rationale for re-categorizing the response choices into specified groups for the financial hardship questions.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare I have no competing interests