Author's response to reviews

Title: Leisure-time versus full-day energy expenditure: a cross-sectional study of sedentarism in a Portuguese urban population

Authors:

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Reviewer's report
Title: Leisure-time versus full-day energy expenditure: a cross-sectional study of sedentarism in a Portuguese urban population
Version: 1 Date: 20 September 2004
Reviewer: Merete Osler
Reviewer's report: General

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Reviewer Comment: In the Introduction the authors state with reference to 3 previous studies that “unexpectedly few studies defined or examined sedentary lifestyle and associated factors at the population level.” Maybe the authors could elaborate on this statement since there are a very large number of studies on this topic. Indeed, it is not clear what new knowledge the present study adds.

Authors Response: A literature review was undertaken to search for current articles on this subject. Some studies were identified, however, few discussed the situation in a southern European country. This sentence has been altered to state that “few studies defined or examined sedentary lifestyle and associated factors at the population level in southern Europe.”

Reviewer Comment: The prevalence of sedentarisms is rather high. Was the used cut-off vaules relevant for the data collection method used in the present study and was it relevant in relation to the recommended 30 minutes of moderate physical activity five days per week?

Authors Response: Since the questionnaire was created to measure METs using cut off values accepted in various publications for low, moderate and high level activities it is felt that the cut off values used are relevant to this study. The data was quickly computed and analysed and it was found that the level of active individuals based on the definition of 30 minutes of moderate physical activity five days per week during leisure time was 8,2% (164) therefore for both sexes the percentage of sedentary individuals in leisure time is approximately 91,8%. When considering 30 minutes of moderate physical activity throughout an entire day the percentage of active individuals was 15.6%. Although this means that a higher percentage are considered sedentary using this definition compared to the one used in this study, the difference between the results is small and can be considered relevant to the 30 minute recommendation.

Reviewer Comment: What was the theoretical and/or empirical basis for the different covariates included in the analyses?

Authors Response: A cross-sectional study is a study that looks openly at a population set of data and provides a base for further studies to be done and questions to be posed. In this way there potential relationships can be further explored through extended study (Ref: Hennekens CH, Buring JE. Epidemiology in Medicine. Lippincott, Williams and Wilkins; Philadelphia, USA; 1987.). These covariates were all chosen as a priori factors that may be associated to differences in levels of physical activity.

Reviewer Comment: In the Abstract is it concluded that promotion of physical activity in Portugal may lead to reduced cardiovascular disease in this population. It does not seem to be the most obvious to conclude on basis of a cross sectional study.
Authors Response: This statement has been altered to support the evidence of this cross sectional study that that the population in Portugal may benefit from the promotion of physical activity since there is generally a low level of physical activity.

Reviewer Comment: What was the basis for classifying alcohol drinking in current, ex and never drinkers. Why not discriminate in relation to consumptions levels?
Authors Response: The classification was based on the responses to the questionnaire, which included these three categories plus occasional drinkers. After further consideration and to discriminate more between low amounts of drinking and regular drinking the groups were re-categorised to include occasional drinkers with non-drinkers instead of with current (regular) drinkers. It was not possible in this study to discriminate in relation to consumption levels.

Reviewer Comment: The last paragraph in the Method section seem to be a part of the results.
Authors Response: The last paragraph in the Method section is a basic description of the population included in the study. There are different streams of thought on where to place this information after further investigation we have chosen to move this paragraph to the Results section following what is presented in the Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals: Writing and Editing for Biomedical Publication (www.icmje.org). Since it states that the information included in the methods section should only include the information at the time the protocol of the study was prepared so this would mean that detailed characteristics should not be included in the methods section.

Reviewer Comment: Why was 1800-2900 used as reference category for Energy intake?
Authors Response: 1800-2300 and 2300-2900 are used as the reference categories for women and men respectively because, since energy intake should be balanced with energy requirements, these are the intakes, in the three categories, are most closely associated with meeting energy expenditure based on an average adult who undertakes little or moderate physical activity. See FAO/WHO/UNU Expert Consultation Interim Report. Report on Human Energy Requirements. World Health Organization 2001; 1–99.

Minors Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions
Level of interest: An article of limited interest
Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: No
Declaration of competing interests: None

Reviewer's report
Title: Leisure-time versus full-day energy expenditure: a cross-sectional study of sedentarism in a Portuguese urban population

Version: 1 Date: 5 November 2004
Reviewer: Alfredo Morabia
Reviewer’s report: General

This is an interesting, well-written and important contribution on the prevalence of sedentarism in a southern European population

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

None

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Reviewer Comment: Table 1: why would female ex-drinkers be more sedentary than never drinkers or drinkers? The finding for alcohol use and sedentarism are different in men in women. It can be argued that none of the ORs are statistically significant in men, but this is probably because it is apparently very atypical not to drink alcohol in Porto. Please report the analysis using "never or occasional drinkers" as referent, and test for some gender, alcohol, sedentarism interaction.

Authors Response: As can be seen in the final version of the article the variable was recoded and interaction was tested. Interaction is significant between gender, alcohol and sedentarism however the OR values do not change significantly when compared to the earlier categorisation used.

Reviewer Comment: The education effect is probably confounded by the occupational effect. Please check.

Authors Response: This has been checked using a logistic regression model and it has been found that there is no significant interaction between the education and occupational effect.

Reviewer Comment: Describe in the methods the major types of blue-collar work performed by women. They are almost as common as for men!

Authors Response: Examples in the different levels of work performed by men and women have been included in the methods section.

Reviewer Comment: Table 2: OR full-day EE and marital status, "1.4"

Authors Response: The number has been changed in the table from 1.39 to 1.4.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Reviewer Comment: Delete "analyses were conducted with STATA" from the Abstract

Authors Response: Deleted
What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: No
Declaration of competing interests: I declare that I have no competing interests