Reviewer's report

Title: Age-Related Fat Free Mass Loss in Older Americans: Rate of Decline is Higher in African American Men and Women than White Men and Women

Version: 1 Date: 23 December 2004

Reviewer: Ronenn Roubenoff

Reviewer's report:

General

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

The possibility that sarcopenia advances more quickly in African-Americans (AA) than in White participants in NHANES III is a novel and intriguing hypothesis, especially in light of the higher baseline lean mass generally seen in AA adults. Thus, this manuscript addresses an important and novel issue.

My major concern is the interchangeable use of longitudinal and cross-sectional language in what is a cross-sectional study. The present study structure is not able to directly address the hypothesis, as this would require longitudinal analysis over time in age-matched racial groups. However, in many cases, there is substantial concordance between cross-sectional and longitudinal changes in body composition in healthy cohorts with age (see for example, VA Hughes et al, Am J Clin Nutr 2004). Nevertheless, by discussing declines in FFM and rates of decline, the authors implicitly describe their results as if they were longitudinal. This point must be clarified.

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

The FFMI was coined by Ted Van Italie in the 1980’s and published in Am J Clin Nutr. The authors should cite this.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory 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.