Author's response to reviews

Title: Body mass index, physical activity, and dietary behaviors among members of an urban community fitness center: a questionnaire survey

Authors:

Kimberly A Kaphingst (kkaphing@mail.nih.gov)
Gary G Bennett (gary_bennett@dfci.harvard.edu)
Glorian Sorensen (glorian_sorensen@dfci.harvard.edu)
Karen M Kaphingst (kaphingst@epi.umn.edu)
Amy E O’Neil (Amy.ONeil@bcbsma.com)
Kyle McInnis (Kyle.Mcinnis@umb.edu)

Version: 3 Date: 21 June 2007

Author's response to reviews: see over
We thank the reviewers for their comments and the opportunity to submit a revised manuscript. Below we detail how we have responded to the remaining comments.

**Major Compulsory Revisions**

None

**Minor Essential Revisions**

None

**Discretionary Revisions**

**Reviewer 1**

1. *Introduction:* It would be helpful for the authors to state why they hypothesized that a smaller percentage of short-term members would be meeting current physical activity, dietary, and weight recommendations compared to long-term members. It is possible that new members are also the most motivated to make changes. Please elaborate in the closing paragraph of the introduction.

   We have added to the end of the Introduction that we hypothesized that a smaller percentage of short-term than long-term members would be meeting current recommendations because they would be less likely to have established fitness and wellness behavioral patterns.

2. *I do not feel that the categorizations of stages of change is adequately explained. Individuals who are sufficiently active to meet recommendations for example, and not planning on increasing activity would be categorized as in the "precontemplation" phase, which seems problematic.*

   We concur that this is a limitation of our measure, but felt that there was not sufficient guidance in the literature to modify it. We have therefore included it as a limitation in our discussion on p. 14 “The motivation to change measure did not exclude individuals already meeting recommendations from the precontemplation group, as it assessed motivation for further behavior change.”

3. *The authors state that they did not observe the hypothesized relationship between physical activity, dietary behaviors, and weight status. A possible reason is their limited assessment of physical activity and dietary behaviors. Physical activity seems to be vastly
overestimated and dietary behaviors comprised servings of fruits and vegetables, without an attempt to collect energy intake, which is likely more important for predicting weight. The authors note in the previous paragraph that physical activity was measured with error, but do not effectively make that connection in the paragraph that follows.

We have added the statement “However, as mentioned above, more careful measurement of physical activity within and outside of the fitness facility is necessary to understand the observed results more completely, as is a more detailed and complete assessment of energy intake” to page 12 to link these points more effectively.

(4) The first full paragraph on page 13 lacks cohesion and should be revised.

We have revised this paragraph as recommended by the reviewer.

(5) It is helpful that the authors discuss limitations in their discussion. It would also be informative for the authors to hypothesize how poor response rates might have biased their results. In addition, the authors note that because of the cross-sectional nature of the data, one cannot infer whether respondents were able to maintain recommended levels of health behaviors over time.

As suggested by the reviewer, we have added a comment on how the response rate might have biased the result to page 14 “Less physically active individuals might have refused to participate, for example, as might those who were less motivated or who had less self efficacy to change behaviors.”

Reviewer 2

None