Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 2 Date: 9 May 2007

Reviewer: Alyson Littman

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)

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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)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.