Reviewer's report

Title: Western Australia (WA) Food Security Project

Version: 2 Date: 14 May 2007

Reviewer: Jennifer Utter

Reviewer's report:

General

This paper aims to describe findings from an audit of food outlets in a lower socio-economic area as it relates to food insecurity. These findings could have very important implications for the local community, but interest and applicability outside of the study area are limited without more contextual information. The paper is reasonably well written, but the references are fairly limited to Australia. Referencing recent work on neighbourhoods and health/nutrition from outside Australia would help to re-frame the manuscript for an international audience.

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

1. Methods: More information about the study area is warranted. How was the ‘region’ defined? Do you have any census data about the population and their major health concerns? Is it urban or rural? Any other issues relevant to understanding the context of this area?
2. Please clarify what is meant by “food outlet”. Does this include any place that sells food or only grocery/convenience store type outlets? If the latter, please provide the context for the rest of the food environment within the area (e.g. fast food, restaurants, green grocers, etc) Also is this all of the food outlets in the area or a sample? What do you know about those that didn’t respond?
3. The response rate for the audit is good. It would be of interest to the readers to know how this was achieved. Was the audit hand delivered or mailed? Was there an incentive? Did a research assistant fill it out with the shop owner, etc?
4. Methods: The audience would be interested in accessing the audit tool. Consider including it as an appendix if it is not too long. Otherwise, more information about the measures is needed. Were they multiple choice or open-ended? How many questions? How long did it take to complete? Why did you choose to ask the questions you asked?
5. Results, paragraph 1. This information may be better presented in a table describing the attributes of the participating food outlets?
6. What is “pre-prepared”? Please clarify.
7. The implications of this study for the local area, but especially for readers outside the study area, need further consideration. An audit of foods available in one region of one city in Australia - without any link to individual health outcomes - is of limited interest to anyone. Please consider how to frame your findings so that policy makers, researchers, etc may use your findings.

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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)

1. Abstract: The aim is not relevant to the current study.
2. Introduction: Paragraphs 1 and 3 include 2 different definitions of food security/insecurity. The former appears to be more relevant to the current study.
3. Introduction, Paragraph 5: The objectives are not grammatically clear.
4. Methods, paragraph 5: The objectives are not grammatically clear.
5. Include % on Tables.

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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 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