Reviewer’s report

Title: Changes in Health Risk Behaviors of Elementary School Students in Northern Taiwan from 2001 to 2003: Results from the Child and Adolescent Behaviors in Long-Term Evolution Study

Version: 2  Date: 12 September 2007

Reviewer: Andrew Springer

Reviewer’s report:

General

Overall, the authors provided a very thoughtful and thorough response to the reviewers’ concerns. Please find below a few additional points to consider in finalizing this paper.

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

1. Lack of Stratification by Gender (Author Response to Reviewers, #6).

“…However, we can not propose any explanation for why some behaviors increased with time for girls or decreased for boys. We felt that perhaps the reader would be confused about why this result was included in this paper since the purpose of this research was not to focus on gender differences.”

Reviewer Response: A large body of research exists on gender differences in health behavior (e.g., refs. #1-3), and it is likely that adolescent health researchers and other public health researchers would not be surprised to see gender differences in health behaviors reported in this study (and may in fact expect them). The inclusion of a gender-focus would provide further insights to guide future research efforts as well as intervention efforts, recognizing that some intervention messages/approaches/target behaviors may differ for girls and boys. This said, the study’s aim was to assess changes with all children, and it appears from the statement on p.12 that the authors did control for gender. The adjustment for gender and residential area needs to be mentioned under data analysis section.

2. Revision #4.a: “This sentence has now been replaced as per your suggestion.”

Reviewer Response: The authors did not modify this sentence on p.13, first paragraph, last sentence. Again, word choice is important here as engaging in one behavior at one time cannot necessarily be considered ‘a problem’ in the chronic sense of the term.


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

Suggested Edits

• P.7: “Suppressing urination was included as due to the traditional…” I would also recommend inserting a semi-colon between “Taiwan” and “some,” or another modification to provide transition here.

• P.10, second paragraph: I would suggest including “(Table 2)” at the end of the first sentence.) P.10: “Further, we analyzed the factor structures of these behaviors separately for rural and urban areas. There were no differences in patterns between these areas.” [insert: “Data not shown.”]

• P.13: “Therefore, as health educators, although we can develop strategies targeting groups of related behaviors, but we still need to pay attention to the different development time courses of each behavior in the group.”

• P.14: Third paragraph: “They and may also feel too…”

• P.16: a suggestion: “…while some others (….), did not decreased or stayed stable.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

3. “Chewing betel nut was selected because of the local custom.”

Reviewer Response: Authors may consider including a short description of the health risk in addition to stating that that this is a local custom. (e.g., “Chewing betel nut is a prevalent local custom in northern Taiwan and was selected based on..x health risk).

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published
**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.