Author’s response to reviews

Title: Food consumption patterns in the Waterloo Region, Ontario, Canada: a cross-sectional telephone survey

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Author’s response to reviews: see over
Dear Dr. Todd,

Please find enclosed the revised version of the manuscript “Food consumption patterns in the Waterloo Region, Ontario, Canada: a cross-sectional telephone survey” (MS: 1804479306192770). Attached to this cover letter are our detailed responses to the reviewers’ comments. We thank the reviewers for their excellent comments, and have attempted to address all of them in the manuscript to the best of our ability. Please note that page, paragraph, and line numbers bolded in the attached response refer to the original version of the manuscript commented on by the reviewers.

Enclosed also is an electronic version of the manuscript, which is in Microsoft Word 2000. Tables in the manuscript are imported objects from Microsoft Excel 2000.

On behalf of all the authors, thank you for considering this manuscript for publication in your journal.

Best regards,

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Detailed response to the reviewers’ comments.

Reviewer 1.

*Major Essential Revisions.*

**Point 1. Clarifying method of food consumption questioning.**

The reviewer raises an excellent point, and a sentence further explaining the method of food consumption questioning was added to paragraph 2, page 7, as follows:

“The interviewer read a list of food items to participants, and respondents were also given the opportunity to mention food items they had consumed that were not on the list.”

**Point 2. Checking the coding of the data.**

The reviewer raises an excellent point regarding the surprising low consumption of potatoes compared to out of season foods such as watermelon and raspberries and therefore the coding of the data were checked. Upon review of the data, potatoes were not included in the list of food items asked of the respondents because consumption of raw produce was of interest in this study and reported potato consumption was provided as an open-ended response from the respondents. The coding is correct and reported potato consumption remained 1.6%. The authors recognize that discussion surrounding potato consumption needs clarification, therefore a brief explanation was added to the manuscript, first paragraph, page 12, as follows:

“Potato consumption was quite low among survey respondents, consumed by only 1.6% of the population. Potatoes were not included in the list of food items asked of the respondents because consumption of raw produce was the main interest in this study and potatoes are rarely eaten raw. The reported consumption of potatoes likely reflects the consumption of cooked potatoes as opposed to raw potatoes and is most likely underreported as it represents open-ended responses given by respondents. In fact, a higher proportion of respondents reported consuming potato salad (8.2%) when asked specifically about potato salad consumption.”

**Point 3. Validity and reliability of the survey method that was used in the current research?**

The reviewer suggests conducting a literature search regarding research that has assessed accuracy of food consumption data. The authors conducted an extensive literature search at the planning stages of the investigation and a number of methodologies to measure individual food consumption were considered. One
option was to consider the diet history approach which captures usual food intake patterns and details about food intake. Another was to consider the dietary record method were the respondent records the foods consumed over a period of days, as well as weighing or estimating the portion sizes. A third option was to consider the food frequency questionnaire which estimates the usual intake of specific foods, over a certain period of time, by recording the frequency and quantity of foods listed in the questionnaire. A fourth option was to consider dietary recall method were all foods and beverages consumed during the immediate past are recorded. After assessing the advantages and disadvantages of the various methods of collecting food consumption data, it was concluded that a seven day food recall was the most feasible method to describe, in detail, the usual food consumption patterns of individuals, while reducing the effects of intra-individual variation.

Recognizing that it is impossible to determine a single best approach for collecting accurate food consumption data, we opted for an approach that would reduce recall bias as well as the effects of day-to-day variability. We chose to use a list of food items for the food consumption questions to prompt the respondents’ memory, while also giving them the opportunity to provide answers that may have been omitted in the food list. Limitations to this method are provided in the manuscript, page 18, last paragraph. It is difficult to measure the validity and reliability of the current survey method as it combines several techniques and thus is an area for future research. Thus, no changes were made to the manuscript on this point.

Point 4. Clarification of statements about potato consumption.

The authors agree with the reviewer that clarification is needed. Please see our response under Reviewer 1, Point 2, for an explanation of potato consumption among respondents.

Minor Essential Revisions.


As per the reviewer’s edits, on page 4, 3rd paragraph, “Individual dietary habits was first assessed…” was changed to “Individual dietary habits were first assessed…”

Point 6. Page 7, 2nd paragraph: Clarifying the meaning of ‘retail meat’.

The authors agree with the reviewer that clarification is needed, and thus an explanation of ‘retail meat’ (we asked questions about the purchase of retail meat, including beef, chicken and pork) was added (page 7, 2nd paragraph, line 17).

Point 7. Page 11, last paragraph, 3rd line: Clarifying the meaning of ‘their commodities’.
The authors agree with the reviewer that clarification on this point is valuable, thus the term ‘commodities’ was changed to ‘the food groups classified in this study’ since these were the food commodity categories we were referring to.


The reviewer raises an excellent point about the objectives of the paper, and the sentence speculating why respondents consume yogurt has been removed.


As per the reviewer’s edits, on page 13, first line, ‘sour milk’ was changed to ‘cultured dairy products’.


As per the reviewer’s suggestion, the text on page 13, 1st paragraph containing references to masculine and feminine foods was removed.

Point 11. Page 15, end of paragraph: Removing explanation about consumption of soy.

As per the reviewer’s edits, on page 15, end of paragraph on soy, speculation about why people consume soy was removed.

Point 12. Tables 2 and 4: Modifying headings in tables 2 and 4.

As per the reviewer’s edits, in tables 2 and 4, the heading ‘(D) Dairy’ was changed to ‘(D) Dairy and Dairy Substitutes’.

Point 13. Tables 2 and 4: modifying heading in tables 2 and 4.

As per the reviewer’s edits, in tables 2 and 4, the heading ‘(F) Nuts’ was changed to ‘(F) Nuts, Seeds, Tofu’.

Point 14. Table 2: modifying footnote.

As per the reviewer’s edits, in table 2, the footnote ‘% of respondents who reported eating at least one of the following dairy products’ was changed to ‘% of respondents who reported eating at least one of the following dairy products or dairy substitutes’.
Reviewer 2.

Point 1. Rationale for using proxy respondents and limitations associate with it.

The authors agree with the reviewer on this point, and a sentence addressing the rationale for using proxy respondents was added, paragraph 2, page 6, as follows:

“Proxy respondents were used, in particular, for participants less than 12 years of age who were less likely to recall their dietary intake over the past 7 days and for those between 12 and 17 years of age whose parent or guardian felt the child would not be able to answer the questions themselves.”

After reviewing the discussion on the limitations of this study, the authors felt that the limitations of the use of proxy respondents (i.e. under-reporting), 2nd paragraph, page 19, were addressed. Thus, no changes were made to the manuscript on this point.

Point 2. Describing all foods surveyed in Table 2.

The reviewer raises an excellent point and this comment is addressed by the response to Reviewer 1 – Point 1, which further explains the method of food consumption questioning described below:

“The interviewer read a list of food items to participants, and respondents were also given the opportunity to mention food items they had consumed that were not on the list.”

Point 3. Identifying high-risk foods consumed by gender and age group.

The reviewer provides an excellent suggestion to provide more detailed information regarding high-risk foods consumed by gender and age group. The authors considered this point at the planning stages of the manuscript and felt that with limited space, highlighting specific high-risk food consumption practices among gender (last paragraph, page 13) and age groups (2nd paragraph, page 16 ) would be appropriate for this paper and that more detailed information would be provided in subsequent papers specifically focused on risky eating behaviours. As a result, the authors have made no changes to the manuscript on this point but will incorporate it in subsequent papers.