Reviewer's report

Title: Use of television, videogames, and computer among children and adolescents in Italy

Version: 2 Date: 15 January 2009

Reviewer: Jennifer Utter

Reviewer's report:

This paper is of public health importance and may be of interest to the international audience. The paper would be improved by addressing the following points.

Major revisions

1. The Background section would be improved with more context about obesity in Italy and with any recent changes regarding television use/availability, computer use/availability, etc. to give the reader some indication why this may be an interesting topic for the Italian population.

2. A full description of all of the measures should be included. This is especially important when comparing the results to other studies.

3. It is unclear why the authors have adopted a stepwise approach to statistical modelling. Is this the most parsimonious approach? Likewise the description of the modelling is very complicated and difficult to follow. It would be improved by clearly stating how each model answers the research questions with justification for including confounders. The theory/justification behind the model specification should be more explicit.

4. On page 11, the authors point out that the cross-sectional nature of the study limits the ability to infer causation from the associations. What other factors could explain some of the key associations observed in this study?

5. The Conclusions are very weak and would be improved with some clear indication of what this study means for Italian young people and what it contributes to the international literature. What are the unique aspects worthy of additional research?

Minor revisions

1. The first two sentences of the Background section need more detail and references.

2. In the second paragraph of the Background section, it would be good to say what the AAP recommendations are for TV and computer use.

3. It would be helpful for the authors to clearly state what the objectives of the study are or what research questions/hypotheses they are testing.

4. It would be helpful to clarify how the researchers maintained student anonymity, especially when parental consent was involved. A description of the
process would be helpful and informative for other researchers wanting to collect anonymous data.
5. The authors should state which organization granted ethical approval for the study.
6. How was the “inconsistent information” determined in excluding participants (Results, paragraph 1)?
7. What are the “methodological differences” that should be considered when comparing your results to international studies?
8. It is surprising that nearly all of the students in this sample had a TV in their bedroom. Is there some explanation that the authors can pose for this finding?

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

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.