Reviewer’s report

Title: Assessment of dietary intake among pregnant women in a rural area of western China

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Reviewer: Christophe Matthys

Reviewer’s report:

The study describes the intake of several nutrients based on a FFQ in a rural setting. Although this is an interesting topic the referee misses a thorough discussion and has some questions about the methodology. Overall the methodology section is long but does not cover everything. Therefore the authors should restrict the descriptions and emphasize the important aspects.

Major Compulsory Revisions:

Methods section:
* The recruitment procedure is not clear, it is not explain how they were selected, is this a convenience sample or a random sample. Is this a random sample of the two counties? Nothing is mentioned about representativeness.
* What does the wealth index reflects and it is based which parameters?
* Section about the 'reference man' method is not clear why does the authors use this method, what do they want to achieve by including this methodology? Is light physical activity representative for women living in rural China? Why do the other use this methodology, to compare with the national survey? Knowing that the used methodology is totally different, this will have a bigger effect than the proposed adjusting method.
* The part about iron in menstruating women in this context is rather strange. Is this copied from another paper or is there a mistake in the text?
* Kruskal Wallis test is not the best test to compare two groups, a Mann-Whitney U test should be used and included in the statistics section.

Result section:
* Related to the tables, the sample size is always missing please provide this very important information.
* Related to the tables please delete all the "legend" information.
* In the first paragraph of the result section all of a sudden "remaining women" appear, could the authors explain this subgroup. No information about the number of remaining women is provided.
* No where it is stated why a median is provided while a lot of these nutrients should be normally distributed.

Discussion section:
this section is rather descriptive and is not very critical.

* The authors decide that half of the women have an inadequate energy intake while they do not discuss the disadvantages of the use of an FFQ. Did the authors include misreporting in their study? The authors should be a little bit more critical for the use methodology.

* the authors provide results in a discussion section, see first lines on page 11.

* in this section some information is repeated, middle of page 11 and some information is not so relevant (see explanation about phytate and its functions, same non-haem iron, same about zinc deficiency

* how can the authors, based on cross-sectional data, decide line 9 and 10 on page 14. This is not in line with some basic epidemiology.

Minor Essential Revisions:

* long-term usual intake is twice the same. A long term intake is a reflection of the usual intake please adjust

**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.