Reviewer's report

Title: Factors and common conditions associated with adolescent dietary supplement use: an analysis of National Health and Nutrition Examination

Version: 1 Date: 18 November 2007

Reviewer: Else-Lydia Toverud

Reviewer's report:

General

The question asked by the authors can be said to be well defined. Because of the number of subgroups studied, the wide range of conditions looked into and the size of the study, the question asked can be defended as "new". The paper is well written and shows interesting results. It is well worth being published.

It is very interesting to see the result that those who had the best health according to themselves and those who had to use prescription medicines especially used a lot of DS.

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

About the two "conclusions".

No doubt that the physicians and the pharmacists should be aware of that there can be interactions between the DS and the prescribed medication some of their patients take. But the conclusion of the paper and the conclusion of the abstract should end more consistently when regards this. For instance could the pharmacist or the pharmacy have been mentioned more specifically in the paper itself.

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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)

About the "methods".

The methods used in the study are appropriate.

In addition to what is described about the questions/questionnaire, it could be interesting to know the total number of questions asked and also the time the interviews were meant to take/took. It is well known that if the time of the interview varies a lot it will also be a big variation in what the informants remember.

Since nothing was asked when regards reasons for the use of DS, a bad diet
was probably never mentioned. However, in a study like this it would be interesting to know how the participants looked upon the quality of their own diet in relation to their intake of DS.

May be also the "methods" chapter could contain one or two subheadings.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

From the papers referred to in the present publication children with chronic diseases often are getting herbs and DS in addition to their prescribed medication.

I would therefore like to refer to a study done in my group which was published only a few weeks ago where we showed that Norwegian parents dare not give such products to their cancer sick children of fear that they might interfere with the medication. However, they claim that they would try such products if they had cancer themselves.

Reference (Unfortunately only the abstract is in English):
Children with cancer and their use of natural products.
Tonje Krogstad, My Nguyen, Eva Widing, Else-Lydia Toverud
Tidsskr Nor Lægeforen 2007; 127: 2524-6

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.

Grahamstown (South Africa)18th of November 2007.

Else-Lydia Toverud