Author's response to reviews

Title: Beverage patterns and trends among school-aged children in the US, 1989-2008

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Version: 2 Date: 13 September 2011

Author's response to reviews: see over
September 12th, 2011

Nehme Gabriel
Editor-in-Chief
MedSource Nutrition Center, United States

Dear Dr. Nehme Gabriel:

We are pleased to re-submit our revised manuscript titled “Beverage patterns and trends among school-aged children in the US, 1989-2008” for publication in the Nutrition Journal. The comments from the editor and reviewer were very helpful and helped improved the quality of the paper. We have addressed all of your comments.

Sincerely,

Barry M. Popkin

BMP:fd
From the Editor:

Additional formatting request:

As your research involves humans please include a statement of ethical approval in the Methods section of the manuscript, including the name of the body which gave approval, with a reference number where appropriate. Any experimental research on humans must be in compliance with the Helsinki Declaration.

Our answer: We added a paragraph in the method section explaining why this study was exempted from the UNC institutional review board.

We would be grateful if you could address the comments in a revised manuscript and provide a cover letter giving a point-by-point response to the concerns.

Our answer: We addressed all the comments made by the reviewer.

Version: 1 Date: 17 July 2011
Reviewer: Vasanti Malik

Reviewer's report:

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

1. Please provide rationale for why was 1% used as the cut-off for low fat milk? Could 2% be considered low fat? The cut-off for considering a beverage as high sugar was 6% of total sugar, based on how many calories?

Our answer: We provided further details about how we split up the categories of milk according to the fat and sugar content. Essentially we have followed the US Dietary Guidelines in using these cut-offs. We do understand that this is not necessarily appropriate; however this is also the cut-off being used by the USDA to determine whether milk is low fat or not for school
milk programs. And these are becoming the compulsory cut-offs. We hope that we clarified this in our revisions.

2. Please provide a reference for the federal policy threshold and the percentages for classifying income level.
Our answer: We included a reference for this in our revisions. There are different thresholds used for SNAP and school lunch.

3. It is difficult to differentiate between the shades of gray in figure 3. Please add patterns or more contrast between shades.
Our answer: Thank you. We changed one of the shades in the figure to black to better show the different milk categories.

4. Page 4 of the background mentions the American beverage association/ Clinton foundation approach of capping calories in beverages and that the present study highlights trends in SSB consumption in the period before and after introduction of this approach. When was this approach introduced? Since this point is raised it would be of interest if it is revisited in the discussion or policy considerations section.
Our answer: We have tried to clarify this in the background section, and we also elaborated more in the discussion section.

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

5. In background, first paragraph, please be specific about what type of juice i.e. 100% fruit juice or fruit juice with added sugar.
Our answer: We have clarified this in the background section.

6. Please edit top of page 4- i.e. nations ban sodas... from schools and edit for typos.
Our answer: We have reworded that paragraph.
Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore):

7. In the statistical analysis section, you could be more explicit about survey commands?
   Our answer: We have clarified this point in the statistical methods section.

8. Can remove STATA commands from abstract
   Our answer: We did that.

9. Would be good to give an example of a sugar sweetened beverage, caloric nutritional beverage and low calorie beverage is in the background
   Our answer: We added a few examples of those beverages in the background section.

10. A potential limitation of the dietary assessment method is also use of a proxy
    Our answer: We added that limitation in the discussion section.