Author's response to reviews

Title: Tracking of eating patterns and overweight - a follow-up study of Norwegian school children from middle childhood to early adolescence

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Version: 3 Date: 20 September 2011

Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Nutrition Journal Editorial Team

We are pleased that the referees were satisfied with the corrections made in the revised of our manuscript and we are grateful for the opportunity to clarify the remaining concerns. We have addressed these concerns point by point below and revised the manuscript accordingly.

Answers to reviewer # 1 (Valeria Hirschler)

“We included the underweight children in the normal weight group at both time points, due to the small number of individuals concerned (n=5/n=1). The overweight and obese children were also combined into one group, denoted ‘overweight’ in the analysis.”

This sentence should be removed from the results section as it was included in the methods section.
Answer: We removed the sentence as suggested.

“At the 7th-grade stage (n=800), the “varied Norwegian” pattern scores were negatively associated with maternal overweight and positively associated with physical activity and with maternal and paternal educational level. The “snacking pattern” scores were positively associated with sedentary behaviour and negatively associated with family income and maternal and paternal educational level. The dieting pattern scores were positively associated with maternal educational level and were significantly higher for girls than boys, while the “junk/convenient” pattern scores were significantly higher for boys than girls (data not shown).”

Correlation numbers and p values should be included. If these correlations were not significant, it should be clarified in the text
Answer: This paragraph was edited as a result of the advice from the referees to take out Table 3 in the first submitted version of our manuscript. The patterns scores within each category were given in the table we were advised to take out. The associations between the pattern scores and the characteristics described in this paragraph were not examined as correlation numbers, but as differences in pattern scores between categories of the mentioned variables. Consequently, it is not possible to included correlation numbers, but we agree that the statistical significance level of the associations should be clarified. We have now added the p-value underlining that all the described associations were significant and the deleted the word “significant” from the two last sentences. The sentence now reads:

“At the 7th-grade stage (n=800), the “varied Norwegian” pattern scores were negatively associated with maternal overweight and positively associated with physical activity and with maternal and paternal educational levels. The “snacking pattern” scores were positively associated with sedentary behaviour and negatively associated with family income and maternal and paternal educational level. The dieting pattern scores were positively associated with maternal educational level and were significantly higher for girls than boys, while the “junk/convenient” pattern scores were significantly higher for boys than girls (p<0.05 for all, data not shown).”
Discussion:
“Studying the association between single foods and meals and overweight at both time points showed a lower intake of vegetables and less regular breakfast eating among overweight compared to normal weight children at the 7th grade stage.”
This sentence should be included in the results section and removed from the discussion section.

Answer: We included the sentence in the results as suggested, but also included a reference to this results in the discussion because this is an important part of our explanation of the change in direction seen for the “varied Norwegian” pattern.

Answers to reviewer # 2 (Emma Patterson)

My only quibble is that the last sentence in the Conclusion is, while likely correct, quite speculative and not strictly supported by the results of the paper, and also introduces new concepts: "A family diet incorporating regular main meals and a variety of foods, including vegetables, fruits, unrefined cereal products, fish and water, may be more important in encouraging weight control in children than the increased use of fat- and sugar-reduced food products." A "family diet" (which I assume refers to the home food environment and/or parental dietary habits), was not assessed here, nor were "weight control" strategies studied. I think the conclusion would be just as effective if the sentence was removed, or if the authors wish to highlight the association seen between the Norwegian diet and weight status it is done in different way.

Answer: We agree that the sentence may seem speculative but rather than deleting this sentence we have rephrased this sentence to be in line with what we had already written in the abstract. The sentence now reads:

Our results indicate that in order to reach normal weight, overweight children should be encouraged to eat regular main meals and retain a diverse diet including unrefined plant foods, water and fish, rather than fat- and sugar-reduced foods and drinks.

Again, we thank the referees for their valuable comments.

On behalf of the authors,
Anne Lise Brantsæter