Reviewer’s report

Title: Characterization of Street Food consumption in Palermo: possible effects on health

Version: 1 Date: 12 July 2011

Reviewer: Kylie Smith

Reviewer’s report:

This is an interesting and novel paper. However, there are some issues that need to be addressed.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Methods

1. Para 2 – What time frame did the street food questions refer to? For example was it intake over the previous 6 months, previous year or was it usual intake?
2. Para 2 – You say there are no exclusion criteria but those who were under 18 years of age, not born or not a resident of Palermo have been excluded.
3. Para 2 – Caldume, fish, and cakes, are included in Table 3 but it is not clear how they were measured. Are fish and cakes items from the restaurant menu? It seems that only the RES group were asked about restaurant food consumption (methods para 5), were the SF group also asked about consumption of RES food?
4. Para 7 – Why was the stepwise forward selection method used to build the regression model? This method is normally used for building a predictive model.
5. Para 3 and 4 – The R2 values reported in the results are not measures of correlation but the portion of variance explained. It would be more appropriate to use the word “associated” instead of “correlated” and to report the regression co-efficients and P-values.

Results

6. Para 2 (Tables 4 and 5) – Some of the participants in the street food group may only eat street food occasionally whereas some participants in the restaurant group could be regular consumers. Please consider combining the two groups and comparing disease rates between high and low consumers instead of between the two methods of recruitment. The two groups were combined in this way when you examined the association between street food score and BMI (Figure 2).
7. Table 3 – The aim of this paper was to examine associations between street food consumption and disease, please include the coefficients for street food score for all disease variables presented in Table 3.
8. Table 3 – For gastro-intestinal diseases crocche is coded 1=yes and 2=not, doesn’t that meant that NOT eating crocche is associated with gastro-intestinal ...
disease (Results Para 4)? In addition, street food score and crocche have both been included in this model – these two variables are not independent if crocche is included in the street food score.

9. Table 3 – Was hypertension associated with BMI? Could this explain the association between Milza and hypertension?

Discussion

10. Please discuss the potential for selection bias – the sampling method used and the large number of customers approached who refused to participate in the study. How do the characteristics of the sample compare to the general population of Palermo? For example the proportion classified as overweight or obese, employed, smokers, married. How does the area that was sampled compare to the rest of Palermo – foods available, customer socio-demographics (discussion para 3 suggests other street food areas may be of lower SES)?

11. Please also discuss the limitations of the street food score, for example someone who eats street food most days of the week but only eats one item would only have a score of 2.

Minor Essential Revisions

12. Abstract and methods – The participant in this study are not patients. Please replace the words “patients cohorts” with groups.

Methods

13. Para 1 – Why were the restaurants contacted? Was it for permission to approach customers? If so, did any refuse?

14. Para 2 – What does “nutritional preferences” mean and how was it measured?

15. Para 3 – How accurate is the weight data on the ID cards? Is there data available to allow you to compare the weight reported on the cards with weight measured for this study? How often are ID cards updated?

Results

16. This paper is examining associations between street food consumption and disease risk. However, some of the diseases presented in Table 4 are not caused by diet and therefore are not relevant for this paper, for example Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and thyroid disease. Please remove these diseases from the table and text.

Discussion

17. Para 5 – Large trials may not be possible, longitudinal studies may be useful

18. Para 5 – Is Milza high in salt/sodium? This may affect blood pressure

19. Para 5 – Typo – should be rice not rise

20. Table 2 – Why are professionals/managers not included in the employed group?
21. Table 2 – Please include the P-values for the NS findings

Discretionary Revisions
Results

22. Para 2 – Consider presenting the results on food preferences in a table.

**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.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.