Reviewer's report

Title: Dietitians use and recommend dietary supplements: report of a survey

Version: 1 Date: 3 December 2011

Reviewer: Jeffrey B Blumberg

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Minor Essential Revisions:

This manuscript clearly and concisely describes a survey conducted in 2009 of RDs on their personal and professional use of dietary supplements. Proper disclosure of the authors’ contributions, competing interests, and funding is provided. A few minor clarifications and revisions would make this report acceptable for publication:

Pg 2, ln 44 – This reviewer is unaware of any nutrition authority or dietary guidelines proffered by any organization that does not suggest that consumption of food is the primary approach to achieving nutritional adequacy. It would be more direct and relevant to this report to describe only the position of specific groups (e.g., ADA, AMA, and/or NIH) regarding dietary supplements.

Pg 4, ln 98 – Substitute “Walter Willett at Harvard University...” for “A prominent nutrition researcher at Harvard...”. As the modified Food Guide Pyramid in Willett’s book is now outdated, it would be useful to cite the Harvard School of Public Health website which describes modifications to the MyPlate guideline by Willett et al:

http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/healthy-eating-plate/healthy-eating-plate-vs-usda-myplate/

Pg 6, ln 123 – It is not clear whether the “2009 survey of dietitians, nurse practitioners, and pharmacists” is a separate study from this one. If it is not, then the text might more clearly state: “…and this 2009 survey of dietitians which included as well nurse practitioners and pharmacists.” If the authors plan to publish their results from the nurse practitioners and pharmacists at a later time, this could be mentioned here. This would also help clarify the data in Table 2.

Pg 12, ln 278-9 – The statement that sports supplements are “a topic of particular interest to one of the authors (LB)” is irrelevant and unnecessary.

Pg 12, ln 279 – The statement that some sports supplements are “relatively noncontroversial” either needs to be explained (e.g., briefly discussing established efficacy and safety of such types of products) or deleted (since it is not directly related to the objective or results of the study). Did the survey or respondent’s comments specifically raise the issue of inappropriate or banned supplements for some sports? If not, why is this topic being raised? Why is the relative degree of controversy and legality about other types of dietary
supplements not raised?

Pg 13, ln 284-9 – The discussion (and Table 3) regarding the dietary supplement issues on which RDs should counsel their clients (including product quality, manufacturer, place of purchase, and cost) does not appear to be derived from this research study. It is not clear that this discussion is directly relevant to the study; however, if the authors feel it is an important topic in the context of their findings, then they should provide the basis for their recommendations and substantiate them with appropriate citations to the literature.

Pg 13, ln 294-9 – These two sentences may be appropriate in the Discussion section but they are not conclusions from this study.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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.