Author's response to reviews

Title: Social and psychological factors affecting eating habits among university students in a Malaysian medical school: a cross-sectional study

Authors:

Sami A R AL-Dubai (samidobaie@yahoo.com)
Kurubaran Ganasegeran (medkuru@yahoo.com)
Ahmad M Qureshi (ahmadmqureshi@gmail.com)
Al-abed A A Al-abed (abed11k@gmail.com)
Rizal MA Manaf (mrizal@ppukm.ukm.my)
Syed M Aljunid (saljunid@gmail.com)

Version: 2 Date: 24 June 2012

Author's response to reviews: see over
Revised version

Social and psychological factors affecting eating habits among university students in a Malaysian medical school: a cross-sectional study

Covering letter

Thank you for your comments and review of this manuscript. This is the revised version according to your advice.

This study aimed to assess the eating habits among medical students and psychological and socio-demographic factors associated with eating habits. This paper is important because eating habits have been a major concern among university students as a determinant of health status. In addition, there is lack of research about the relation between psychological factors and eating habits. This study is the first in Malaysia that aimed to assess such association. This study found a significant relationship between psychological factors and eating habits among medical students.

Response to reviewers

Dear reviewers: thank you very much for your comments. The changes you advices were done and were highlighted (yellow) in the main manuscript.
Below are my response to your comments:

Reviewer 1

Thank you very much

Reviewer 2

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Methodology, page 5 / study setting and population, last sentence: Please, place the number of the approval of ethics Committee

2 Results, page 6 / Socio-demographic Characteristics, first sentence: “One hundred and thirty two out of 140 students...”. Please, clarify the population number studied in the methodology section. It is a bit confuse

the total number is 140 and the participants were 132 . we clarify that in the methodology. In the result part we add the response rate.

3. Conclusion, Page 12 / first sentence: I cannot understand why you concluded that most students studied hold unhealthy eating habits. You’ve shown considerably good results in terms of healthy eating habits when compared to other studies cited in your paper. Please, clarify your conclusion.

We change our conclusion to be:

In general, most of the students in this study had healthy eating habits except in frequency of meals, fruit consumption, water intake and consumption of fried food.

4. Conclusion, Page 12 / last sentence: Please, clarify what would be a representative sample size.

Clarified

5. Discussion: The issue studied has been widely discussed nowadays. It is desirable that you add to the discussion how your study may help to improve the eating habits of Malaysian/Asiatics students and even how it can be used by the Asian population, as well as populations of other nations.
We add the following to the discussion:

With the paradigm shift towards industrialization and cultural change globally, information on healthy diet has become scarce in many developing and developed nations. The most vulnerable group, being university students, have adopted unhealthy eating behaviors due to reduced availability, affordability and accessibility of healthy diet in university campuses and surrounding food outlets. This study exhibited multi-factorial causes affecting eating habits among Malaysian university students. Understanding the contexts of such multi-factorial causes may help healthy food promotional activities by parents, university authorities, food providers and health promotion officers. Results of this study may help to create a foundation for possible interventional programs on healthy eating habits promotions. Blended with different socio-cultural and psychological attributes across different regions, a unified healthy eating policy should be drafted, being potentially amalgamated and practiced in all regions including developing and developed nations.

Minor essential revisions
1. Results, Table 6: this table shall be reorganized; information displayed is quite cluttered.

We removed the references group from the table and indicated them in the title of the table. The table now is clear and not cluttered.

Discretionary Revisions
1. Background, page 4, second paragraph: Improve the first sentence. It can Begin with: “In 2011, ...”.

Done

2. Statistical analysis, page 6 / penultimate line: Remove the capital letter from the Word “Psychological”.

Done
3. Discussion, page 10, first paragraph: Improve the penultimate sentence. It would be desirable not to begin with the name of the author of papers.

Done

4. Discussion, page 11, 2nd paragraph: Please, rewrite the sentence, it is confusing.

Done

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.