Author's response to reviews

Title: Nutritional Supplement Products: Does the label information influence purchasing decisions for the physically active.

Authors:

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Version: 2 Date: 2 September 2013

Author's response to reviews: see over
Date 02\textsuperscript{nd} September 2013

Dr Hiromichi Kumagai  
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Dear Dr Kumagai,

Thank you for the reviewers’ comments and the opportunity to resubmit a revised paper. We found the reviewers comments useful and have incorporated changes in the revised paper wherever possible. We have responded to each reviewer separately (below) letters. We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Gary Gabriels

Reviewer's report
Title: Nutritional Supplement Products: Does the label information influence purchasing decisions  
Version: 1 Date: 25 June 2013  
Reviewer: Shelly Meltzer  
Reviewer's report:

We would like to thank the reviewer for the comments, which we believe have improved the quality of the manuscript. Our response is pasted below each comment.

Minor Essential Revisions
1. The participants need to be more clearly defined. The introduction refers to "a range of people" yet it seems that only "moderately active and "competitively physically active" persons between the ages of ±19-40 years were included in the analysis?

Response: The last paragraph in the “background” has been changed to:

"Therefore the aim of this study was to determine how consumers of nutritional supplement products acquire information to assist their purchasing decisions [16-22]. People who were
between 19-40 years of age, who were either moderately physically active or competitive were asked to complete a self-administered questionnaire, which enquired about which container label information and information other than container labelling sources, influenced their purchasing decisions for nutritional supplements.”

How the different categories were defined should be included.

Response: The categories of moderately physically active and competitive were the participants’ own descriptions. The following:

“The categories of physical activity were explained to the participants. Competitively physically active was defined as organised sport at a high performance level. Moderately physically active was defined as organised sport at a social and/or recreational level”.

The title should also somehow indicate that the study was on a specific group of people. This is important as it may have influenced the results, for example, the level of importance placed on ‘banned substances’.

Response: The different categories- The title was modified to “Nutritional Supplement Products: Does the label information influence purchasing decisions for the physically active”.

2. The way in which the results are described is confusing in the sections "Information on the container label that influenced purchase of nutritional supplements" and "information not on container label". For example, the sentence "132 Respondents stated that the brand name influenced purchase....seems to include the 13% of participants that were NOT influenced by the brand name”? i.e. if they answered the question it does not necessarily imply that they were influenced by the Brand name.

Response: The paper focuses on what influences purchasing decisions. So the point is that brand name on the scale i) absolutely no influence, (ii) partially no influence, (iii) uncertain, (iv) moderately influenced and (v) strongly influenced.

Yes there were 132 respondents to this question, of which 13% of the respondents indicated that they were not influenced by the brand name in making a purchasing decision.

3. It would be interesting to know how the purchasing of supplements by the 2. competitively active) was influenced by label information and other factors (e.g media/gym/doctor). Was this data analyzed?

Response: This is an important question, but is the basis for a subsequent research paper. The purpose for this research paper was to focus on whether the label information influences purchasing decisions, and, if not, what other factors influenced the decision for purchasing.

4. It should be made clear in the discussion that these findings relate to a particular group of people (i.e moderately active, physically active...) and younger/older/inactive persons may have responded differently (e.g banned substance information may not have been as important?).

Response: This point is noted and accepted, and has been clarified in the discussion.

“OUR MISSION is to be an outstanding teaching and research university, educating for life and addressing the challenges facing our society.”
“The main finding of this study, with particular emphasis on moderately physically active and competitive participants, was that close to 70% of the respondents who purchased supplements were strongly influenced by container label information that stipulated that the nutritional supplement product is free of banned substances”

Study limitations should be highlighted. For example, no mention of parental influence in purchases?. There may also be a different influence between doctors/pharmacists and dietitians...

Response: Thank you, this is a good point which we have incorporated into the revised paper.

“With hindsight it would have been useful to have included a specific category, "parental influence in purchases". Furthermore, the findings of this study only relate to the specific groups of moderately physically active and competitive participants between the ages of 19-40 years. It is accepted that younger and older participants, may have responded differently to the questionnaire. There may also have been different influences within the broad professional categories that were used in the questionnaire”.

5. In the conclusion, it is not clear what is meant by point (d).
Response: This point has been clarified

6. Language and flow throughout requires attention and in some areas more explanation is required. For example, in Background pgf 1, difficult to read; under Materials and study population, pgf 3 "information and information.....information"; "truthfully and honestly" (=same?); in Results section "Information not on container label"...needs an introduction.
Response: the paper has undergone a thorough edit. These points have been considered and improvements made where deemed necessary.

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Reviewer's report
Title: Nutritional Supplement Products: Does the label information influence purchasing decisions
Version: 1 Date: 17 June 2013
Reviewer: Andrea Petroczi
Reviewer's report:

The paper addresses an ongoing issue, namely the regulation of nutritional (dietary) supplements, from the athletes’ point of view.
The complexity of the issue in sport is that in addition to potential consequences to health and drug-interaction, contaminated or incorrectly labelled products may lead to inadvertent doping.
Response: This suggestion has been incorporated in the paper (discussion)

“The complexity of the issue in sport is that in addition to potential consequences to health and drug-interaction, contaminated or incorrectly labelled products may lead to inadvertent doping. This information points to the level and degree of concern that consumers of nutritional supplements would have if not all product content is declared on the container label.“

“OUR MISSION is to be an outstanding teaching and research university, educating for life and addressing the challenges facing our society.”
The survey and sampling method yielded useful information, which somehow lost in the dry and repetitive way of reporting the results.

**Response:** Point accepted. We have tried to improve the way in which the information is presented.

I found the text repetitive which also duplicates the information neatly presented in the figures.

**Response:** Point accepted. We have tried to improve the way in which the information is presented in the revised paper.

**Major revisions:**
The interpretation of the results (which should replace the majority of the text in the current results section in the context of anti-doping and public health would greatly enhance the impact of this paper.

**Response:** Point accepted. We have attempted to respond to this point in the revised paper.

In my opinion, discussion should be expanded to incorporate implications of the findings instead of the mere reporting of percentages (which are shown in the figures).

**Response:** Point accepted. The discussion now has a section on “Implication of findings - container label information” and “Implication of findings - other than the container label information” and improvement has been made in the approach to attend to the recommendation for expansion and implications.

Some background information that would be helpful for further developing the discussion and conclusion is listed below.


**Response:** This point has been considered and included in the revised paper.

Looking at gender differences (if any) along with the sport-involved could provide an interesting insight – of if there is no difference between males and females in any of the factors investigated, the authors should say so (with supporting evidence).

**Response:** Thank you, we agree that this is an important point, but did not include the gender analyses for two reasons: (i) we lacked statistical power, and (ii) the original study was not designed to answer this question. Had this been the case we would have changed the strategy we used for data collection. However, we agree the question is an important one and will form the basis for a subsequent research paper.

If data are available, authors should also reflect on the type of products likely to
be used by athletes and likely to be contaminated, either owing to poor quality control and deliberate adulteration (spiking).

Response: The questionnaire that was used in this study was specifically focussed on the research question. There is an analytical component to this study, which will be submitted for publication elsewhere as a separate manuscript. Unfortunately the 2 studies cannot be linked as one publication.

I also suggest that the authors make recommendations for the regulatory bodies, as well as for those involved in anti-doping, to address the problem highlighted in the paper (i.e. almost unconditional trust in label information). The issue of ‘trust’ could also be an interesting angle to explore – with the support of the literature.

Response: Thank you, we have attended to the recommendation to regulatory bodies, as well as for those involved in anti-doping in the revised paper. The “trust” suggestion was considered but will detract from the specific focus of the intended paper. This will be followed up in subsequent work.

“Recommendations
Regulation and Enforcement
To enhance the overall quality of supplements there needs to be a concerted effort across sovereign states and continental unions to align regulatory frameworks and methods of surveillance.

Anti-doping laboratory for supplements and punitive measures
Accredited laboratories with the same status as anti-doping agency laboratories need to be introduced with adequate global standard. In all these cases, a physical sample would be required to judge whether the supplement has complied with the required safety requirements.”

Given that the survey sample consist of high level athletes (i.e. data collected in holding camps), authors should also reflect on what the relevant national anti-doping organisation does to help athletes avoiding inadvertent doping (perhaps to be discussed this in international and global context)
Response: Thank you. We feel that this point is accommodated by the various revisions we have made in the paper.

Minor revisions:
The paper is generally well-written, apart from a few awkwardly phrased sentences (e.g. “the absence intentionally or unintentionally of specific information with specific reference to…” – please revise.
Response: Thank you. We have edited the paper thoroughly in an attempt to improve the grammar

Combine small tables (i.e. Table 1 and Table 2)
Response: This point was considered, however we felt the resultant table was too cluttered, so we have reverted to the original format.

Reorganise the results/discussion – currently very segmented with short (one paragraph sections, each with its own subheading)
Response: Thank you. In accordance with this comment, and the comments from the other reviewer, we have re-written this section.