Author's response to reviews

Title: Ethnic differences in grains consumption and their contribution to intake of B-vitamins: Results of the Multiethnic Cohort (MEC) Study

Authors:

Sangita Sharma (gita.sharma@ualberta.ca)
Tony Sheehy (t.sheehy@ucc.ie)
Laurence N Kolonel (lkolonel@cc.hawaii.edu)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
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Subject: MS#1555425437765215

Dear Editor:

We thank you for considering a revised version of our manuscript, “Ethnic differences in grains consumption and their contribution to intake of B-vitamins: Results from the Multietnic Cohort (MEC) Study”.

We would like to thank the reviewers for their time and input to our manuscript. We have completed the suggested revisions and included a point summary of our responses below (author responses are in italics).

Sincerely,

Sangita Sharma, Ph.D.
Endowed Chair in Aboriginal Health,
Professor of Aboriginal and Global Health
University of Alberta, Department of Medicine
Reviewer #1
Major compulsory revisions:
Please state the purpose of describing dietary sources of grains and their contribution to B-vitamins (the objective). Why is this needed?
Background, last paragraph, sentences 4, 5 and 7: we have expanded the last paragraph in the Background to include discussion regarding why we considered it relevant to examine these factors, and also added references (#28-31).

The first sentence in the discussion (page 7): "In particular, JpAm... (men or women or both??).
This sentence has been revised to indicate this was the JpAm men.

Tables:
- Is it relevant to report "main contributors" with less than 5% contribution?
Please consider to put a cut-off (eg 3-5%) instead of reporting the 10 most common contributors. This will clear the tables from some "unstable estimates" (those items with a very low contribution) and facilitate reading of the tables
- Consider to put all foods in one column and then report % for the separate strata. This will of course "destroy" the order from highest to lowest contribution within each column, but if putting a higher cut-off value, less items will be presented and then it doesn't matter if the contributors are not ordered from highest to lowest.

We agree that reducing the amount of data in the tables would be appropriate to improve readability and interpretation. We have limited the data, but chose to limit to the top 5 common sources, rather than using a specific cut-off, as the intent of the study was to compare common sources among the ethnic groups, and use of a cut-off would have resulted in different numbers of food groups listed for the different ethnic-sex groups. We have changed the presentation to have all foods in one column as suggested, and have also re-arranged presentation of the sex groups to facilitate sex-comparisons within ethnic groups.
We have also revised the text in the results and discussion accordingly to reflect these changes (e.g., ‘top ten’ was changed to ‘top five’), and some additional changes were made to clarify the findings noted in the text:
- Results-Sources of grain intake, 2nd sentence: added clarification of numbers reported before ‘50.6-68.7%’).
- Results-Sources of grain intake, 2nd paragraph, last sentence: modified to discuss items appearing infrequently among the top 5.
- Results- Contribution of grain to B vitamins, 1st paragraph: the first sentence was removed to focus on the results presented in Table 3, last 2 sentences revised to reflect findings in the top 5 (for Table 3).
- Results- Contribution of grain to B vitamins, 2nd-5th paragraphs; revised accordingly to reflect new tables with only top 5 results.

- For refined grains and B-vitamins, the total contribution of the "top 10" items is low. This needs to be discussed in the paper. How come? Implications? I think this is another argument for changing the reporting criteria to a cut-off value instead of top 10 food items (as many of these items contribute to a very minor extent).
Discussion related to this point and 2 additional references have been added to the manuscript (Discussion- 4th paragraph, sentences 4-7).

Reviewer #2
Major compulsory revisions
1. The Methods section needs a more complete description of the accuracy of the FFQ in measuring the B vitamins.
Methods, 1st paragraph, last 2 sentences: We have added additional comments regarding the calibration study (Stram et al.).
Although that study did not report correlations for B vitamins, the results suggest that the QFFQ is a valid instrument for measuring nutrient intake. However, we agree this may still be a limitation, and have also added comments in this regard to the Discussion of limitations (last paragraph, 2nd and 3rd sentences).

Minor essential revisions
1. Discussion, 1st paragraph. Change “Ethnic differences in grains consumption were previously reported.” to “Ethnic differences in grains consumption have been previously reported.” Completed
2. Discussion, 3rd paragraph. Add “of” to “… change color foods.” Completed

Minor issues not for publication.
1. Background, 2nd paragraph. What is resistant starch?
We have added a reference to this sentence (#11) this is starch that is not digested and can act as a dietary fibre.

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published.
We have reviewed the paper and made minor grammatical corrections and clarification to text throughout, particularly in the Results section.