Reviewer's report

Title: Very low calorie diet without aspartame in obese subjects: improved metabolic control after 4 weeks treatment

Version: 2
Date: 31 March 2014

Reviewer: Ingvar Bosaeus

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This study explored effects of a 4 weeks treatment with a VLCD containing fructose as sweetener in 25 obese subjects (7 with diabetes) in a pre-post design without controls. Mean weight was reduced by approx. 8 kg, and reductions in fasting plasma glucose, HBA1c, cholesterol and triglyceride levels, and systolic blood pressure were found. Changes in other monitored blood chemistry values were judged to be without clinical importance.

It is concluded that the treatment gave a substantial weight reduction without any significant negative metabolic effects.

- Minor Essential Revisions

1/ It is unclear to me how much fructose the preparation used contains. This should be reported in the text and/or in Table 3.

2/ I am puzzled about Table 5.
   a/ It should be explained in the Table text if (as I presume) the P column denotes statistical significance level of the pre-post change.
   b/ The ranges given for CRP (4.9 – 8.0 before, 4.9 – 4.9 after)? It should be stated if this means that all CRP levels below 5 were reported as CRP < 5, that is low sensitivity CRP, and how this was statistically treated.
   c/ How can a mean value for potassium of 4.3 both before and after be assigned a p value of 0.04 in a group n=21?
   d/ The seemingly significant increases in liver enzymes AST and ALT, though they may be clinically unimportant, should be commented on, as fructose in other contexts than the negative energy balance in this study has been associated with fatty liver.

- Discretionary Revisions

3/ It would be of interest to have the reductions in weight, glucose and HbA1c in the 7 diabetic subjects reported separately in the Results text.

4/ Given the financial support from the manufacturer reported in Competing interests, it could be stated if the manufacturer had any part in the initiation and/or design of the study or not.
Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.