Reviewer's report

Title: Validity of a self-reported measure of familial history of obesity

Version: 1 Date: 30 March 2008

Reviewer: Anne Taylor

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Major Compulsory Revisions

The inherent biases in this study need to be addressed. Additional information is required in the methods section and a more detailed discussion on the implications of the bias should be included in the conclusion.

Minor essential revisions

There are many grammar and spelling errors throughout the manuscript that need attention. For example:
1. Page 1 – “this author HAS no potential conflicts (for each of the 4 authors)
2. Abstract – Methods – ‘The aims of the study 1 was to’ could be changed to ‘The aim of study 1 was to’ (repeated in the next line for study 2)
3. 6th line of abstract – methods – ‘Study 1 was (a) conducted..’
5. Page 3 – Introduction – second paragraph – line 7 – would be better as ‘However there is one study which assessed the accuracy…’
6. There are other examples.

The literature review also requires a revision. In particular:
7. I have problems with the broadness of the statement – ‘...it is well known that self-reported height and weight are highly predictive of measured values’. I believe the literature shows mixed results and self-reported is indeed not ‘highly’ predictive of measured values. My understanding of the literature is that weight is underestimated and height overestimated and there are many discrepancies across a range of demographic variables.
8. Too many sentences starting with ‘thus’ or ‘however’.
9. I also found many of the references quite old.

Within the methods section the following edits/issues need to be addressed:
10. Include additional detail on the recruitment messages – was height and weight mentioned?
11. Study 2 – what is the definition of a family member (was it limited to mother,
father, and sibling)?

12. Study 2 – each participants was ‘asked to transmit’ the consent form and questionnaire. Were they given any instructions on not discussing the measurements so that the study had some semblance of being blind??

13. Study 2 – were family members encouraged to measure their height and weight rather than guess???

Edits required in the results section include:

14. Tables – it would be better if * signified a significant difference and another symbol (rather than a letter) signified BMI (if BMI needs explanation)

15. Table 1 – some results are highlighted with a ‘a’ but where is ‘a’ in the explanations (I assume it is ‘b’)?

16. The text sort of indicates that for study 1 there was a significant difference in height for women but this is not highlighted in Table 1.

17. The test states there were no significant differences in Study 2 but table 1 has two ‘a’s which might signify a statistical difference.

18. Is Table 2 really necessary?

19. Table 3 needs better labelling

Discussion

20. There are many shortcomings/limitations in this study and if these were addressed adequately in the discussion, I would have more confidence that the conclusions being reached are indeed accurate.

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

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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