Author's response to reviews

Title: Change in diet, physical activity, and body weight among young-adults during the transition from high school to college.

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Version: 2 Date: 22 May 2009

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Authors’ response to reviewers’ comments
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Nutrition Journal
May 22, 2009

The authors very much appreciate the detailed and thoughtful review of this manuscript and believe the changes made in response to these reviews greatly improves the quality of the manuscript. We would be happy to address any additional concerns. Detailed below is our response to each reviewer’s specific comments as outlined in the PDF files downloaded from the Nutrition Journal author’s page. Our responses are labeled with the number and titles assigned by the reviewer and are in the order they appeared in the original PDF files.

Response to Review 1
Sherrie Delinsky

1. In the abstract conclusions, the phrasing was changed to “Almost one quarter…”
2. Additional text was added to the background section on which unhealthy behaviors are hypothesized to contribute to weight gain in this population (background section, page 3, paragraph 3).
3. Additional text was added to the methods section to describe that the study was pitched as the “Freshmen Health Study” to participants. Also included are participation rates (Method section, page 4, paragraph 1).
4. The method section now includes the range of time period that the FFQ covers (Methods section, assessment of exposure heading, page 6, paragraph 1).
5. The first two sentences in the Assessment of exposure variables section have been reworded (page 5).
6. The word include was changed to includes.
7. A phrase was added clarifying that the question capturing perceived difference in physical activity was only asked at the follow-up assessment was added (page 6, paragraph 2).
8. The One-Way ANOVA procedure produces a one-way analysis of variance for a quantitative dependent variable by a single factor independent variable (BMI status at baseline or weight gain). Analysis of variance is used to test the hypothesis that several means are equal and is simply an extension of the two-sample t test. A short sentence describing this was added to the text (page 7, paragraph 2).
9. Information about ethnicity of the sample was added. The sample was predominately white-non-Hispanic (96.6%). The very few numbers of ethnically diverse participants prevented us from being about to look at differences in weight status and risk of weight gain by ethnic groups (page 7, paragraph 3).
10. A line was added stating the % of the population that did not change weight (page 8, paragraph 3).
11. The time frame for times per week of eating in on campus dining facilities was added (page 11, paragraph 1).
12. The identified phrase was changed to the word “marginal” (page 11, paragraph 1, last sentence).
13. A sentence paragraph summarizing the associations between breakfast consumption and weight was added to the discussion section. Also added, was a possible explanation for the observation we observed. (page 11, paragraph 2).
14. A phrase was added to the sentence describing this in the discussion sentence stating that the accelerated rate of weight gain experienced by freshmen did not continue through senior year of college, which is different than saying they returned to pre-college weight. (page 10, last sentence of paragraph 3)

Response to Review 2
Elizabeth Richardson

Introduction – Major Compulsory Revisions
1. Additional details were added to the introduction including the average amount of weight gain reported in previous studies and the specific behaviors being assessed in this study and hypothesized to be associated with risk for weight gain. (page 3, last sentence of paragraph 2, and second sentence of paragraph 3)
2. The specific hypotheses were added. (page 3, last sentence of paragraph 3)

Methods – Major Compulsory Revisions
1. Details about the recruitment method were added including a description of the convenience sample method used to recruit participants and the percent of the incoming freshmen class that this study represents. (page 4, paragraph 1) No information is available regarding the SES of either the study or broader freshmen student population. A slightly greater percentage of the study population is white-non-Hispanance and female than in the broader freshmen student population. This is now noted in the text in the first paragraph of the Results section. We felt that this information fit better in the results section than the methods. (page 7, third sentence of the first paragraph in the results section)
2. We now offer an explanation for the decrease in drinking rates from the baseline assessment to the follow-up assessment. (page 12, last sentence of the first paragraph)
3. We have included two references supporting the justification to define a “clinically significant weight change” as >= 5%. (page 5, last sentence of the Assessment of Weight Change paragraph)
4. Documentation for the validity of the FFQ is provided. A statement noting that the other survey questions were adapted from tools used in previous studies, but not validated is also included. (page 5, first paragraph of Assessment of exposure variables; page 7, last sentence of first paragraph)
5. An Bonferroni adjustment to the p-values for multiple comparisons tests was taken and included in the results section and in table 2. (page 9, paragraph 2; footnote to table 2)

Results – Major Compulsory Revisions
1. Information was added on the study sample including the ethnicity of participants. (page 7, first paragraph of results section; also page 4, first paragraph of methods section)
2. The word “However” was eliminated.
3. An explanation for this phenomenon was added to the text. Briefly, BMI is a ratio of height to weight. Males are on average taller than females, so a similar change in weight would result in a greater change in BMI for females compared to males. (page 8, third sentence of paragraph 3)
4. The description of the non-significant findings were removed.
5. We acknowledge the substantial decrease in total energy intake from the baseline to follow-up assessments. We believe that while this may be due to some decrease of recall bias when using the same method to measure two different time periods in the past, others have also observed decreases in average energy intake among participants followed from the beginning of their freshmen year to the end of their first semester. We have noted these findings and offer justification of these observations in the discussion section. (page 12-13, last paragraph on page 12, first paragraph on page 13)

Discussion
1, 2. The limitation of differences in largely ethnicity and other health-related behaviors among the population in this study and a nationally representative sample of freshmen is now explicitly stated as a limitation in the discussion section. Religiosity was not assessed in this study. However, the sample is similar to other samples in regards to percent of incoming freshmen entering college overweight, and average amount of weight gained during the first semester of college. (page 13, third paragraph)
3. All references to the “freshmen-15” were removed.
4. The spelling of Levitsky was corrected. (page 10, paragraph 2)
5. The time frame for times per week of eating in on campus dining facilities was added. (page 11, paragraph 1)
6. The differences in vegetable intake were not significant, and this section of the discussion seemed less relevant to the flow of the discussion, so it was removed. Further development of the findings regarding sleep and breakfast consumption patterns were added to the discussion. We believes this strengthens the discussion and provides a better flow of information while remaining focused on the findings from this study. (page 11, paragraph 2 and 3)
Response to Review 3  
Susan Racette

1. The word study was changed to system (BRFSS). (page 3, paragraph 1)  
2. The sentence describing the FFQ in the methods section was reworded. (page 5, paragraph 3)  
3. The spelling of Levitsky was corrected. (page 10, paragraph 2)  
4. The paragraph including the phrase MyPyramid was deleted from the discussion. The information on vegetable intake was not pertinent to the results of the study or flow of information and was removed.  
5. Table 2. The footnote b was changed to refer to the first semester of college.  
6. The number of females and meals and the number of participants in the final sample was added to the abstract.  
7. The mean BMI was added to the abstract.  
8. The final sentence in the conclusion of the abstract was “softened” and now refers to support for strategies aimed at helping young-adults entering college to achieve or maintain a healthy body weight.  
9. The total number of students in the freshmen class is now included in the methods. A sentence about ineligibility is also included. (page 4, paragraph 1)  
10. A sentence stating that the final weight measurement was obtained the week prior to finals week for 95% of participants was added to the text. (page 4, paragraph 2)  
11. A sentence regarding the modifications to the FFQ was added to the method section. (page 5, paragraph 3)  
12. The percentages of the sample who were females and males is now included in the text in the results section. (page 7, first paragraph in the results section)  
13. The low-cut point for BMI was changed to 18.5 kg/m2 (CDC, World Health Organization) rather than 20 kg/m2. (page 7, first paragraph in the results section)  
14. A paragraph was added to the discussion section summarizing findings regarding associations between risk of weight gain and breakfast consumption and sleeping. Also added, was a possible explanation for the observations we observed. (page 11, paragraph 2)