Reviewer’s report

Title: The influence of taste disorders on dietary behaviors in patients with cancer under chemotherapy treatment

Version: 1 Date: 23 September 2009

Reviewer: Barbara Stewart-Knox

Reviewer’s report:

General Points
Replace ‘perception’ threshold with ‘detection’ threshold throughout.
Correct grammar throughout.
Pages are not numbered.

Abstract
Remove ‘dietary nutrient’ consumption and replace with ‘food habits’ (since an FFQ was used).
Insert ‘(sweet)’ after sucrose.
Replace ‘perception’ threshold with ‘detection’ threshold.

Introduction
Reference all background statements.

Method
Sampling
How were the sample/s recruited?
Were the cancer and non-cancer groups matched in any way (e.g. demographically)?
What sort of cancer (also prognosis) did the patient group have? This is important as cancer of the head and neck or GI tract may have a direct influence on the outcome variables over and above that of the chemotherapy.

Dietary assessment
It is unclear if a dietary history was taken in addition to using an FFQ or were both used?
More detail as to the structure, format and outcome measures of the FFQ is required.

Taste threshold assessment
Where any tests carried out at baseline, before the chemotherapy?
Only three threshold concentrations were used. Was this method sensitive
What is meant by ‘hedonic responses’ and how were they measured?

Data Analysis
Specify which variables were analysed by which method?

Results
That ‘some subjects had no perception or recognition threshold at any concentration’ suggests a floor effect and a major methodological flaw (see above)!
Where there any baseline dietary or sensory measures taken prior to chemotherapy?
Strange that there were no differences in dietary intakes at baseline, unless these measures were taken prior to chemotherapy?
Tables need more information as to when (what stage in the research process) the data were collected.
Tables 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6: What test/s were used?

Discussion
Explore the significance of lower zinc intake among the cancer group?
Was the cancer the problem or the chemotherapy?
The methodological weaknesses of the research do not appear to be addressed in the discussion.