Author's response to reviews

Title: Effects of Lifestyle Modification on Metabolic Syndrome: A Meta-analysis

Authors:

Kazue Yamaoka (kazue@med.teikyo-u.ac.jp)
Toshiro Tango (tango@medstat.jp)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
COVER LETTER

July 31, 2012

RE: Effects of Lifestyle Modification on Metabolic Syndrome: A Meta-analysis

Dear Dr. Claire Tree-Booker:

We would like to express our deep appreciation for the valuable additional comments made by the reviewer. Based on these recommendations, we have revised the manuscript and attached our responses to the reviewer’s comments.

The attached paper has been carefully reviewed by an experienced medical editor whose first language is English and who specializes in the editing of papers written by physicians and scientists whose native language is not English. Please find the attached proofreading certificate for English.

We are submitting two versions of this paper, both of which are the same except in presentation. The first is a clean copy with no strike-out marks. Red font reflects areas where changes were made. The second version shows the changes and additions in red font and the deletions in blue using the strike-out feature. Perhaps you will want to supply the reviewer with both copies.

We hope that this revised paper is satisfactory and that our responses are clearly presented so that our revised manuscript will be accepted for publication in BMC Medicine. If you require further revisions that would make this paper acceptable, we would be glad to make them. We certainly have appreciated your very careful review and would be more than happy to follow any further suggestions.

Thank you again for considering our manuscript. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,

Kazue Yamaoka
For Dr. M. Hassan Murad’s Comments:

Thank you very much for your valuable additional comments concerning our manuscript. We found these most helpful and have re-revised the manuscript accordingly. We hope that the corrections are satisfactory. Responses to specific comments are as follows.

MAJOR COMPULSORY REVISIONS
The systematic review remain inferior in terms of clarity and rigor.
1. The quality assessment of the individual studies is very brief and primitive.
High quality systematic reviews use a standardized instrument (preferable the Cochrane Collaboration risk of bias tool) and report these elements for every individual study.

We evaluated RCT studies as carefully as we could and extracted data for the meta-analysis as well. We assessed the studies mainly for the elements of allocation concealment, blinding, and loss to follow-up which were listed as the elements of risk of bias table from Cochrane review. We agree about the importance of the quality assessment and respect the recommendations of the Cochrane Collaboration and several GRADE studies in order to improve the quality of papers. However, we think that the apparent quality of a paper does not necessarily relate to the true quality of the study, and we cannot necessarily evaluate the true quality of a study because of limited resources. In the process of this systematic review, we searched related papers and registered records, and queried authors by sending e-mails but sufficient information was not acquired for the assessment of risk of bias. In particular, we cannot evaluate the direction of bias, which is most important for interpretation of the results. We do not consider that lack of description about the elements necessarily means low quality of the study, because not all journals asked the authors to follow the recommendations. Nonetheless many journals limit the words count in a paper. Furthermore we think that unknown publication bias is more important but we cannot estimate the size of publication bias.

From these viewpoints, we corrected descriptions in the “Data extraction and
risk of bias in individual studies” of the Method section.

2. An overall statement that summarizes the quality of evidence (i.e., confidence in the reported estimates) is needed. This is typically done following something like the GRADE framework. This would give readers an indication of how much faith they should have of your findings.

As we mentioned above, we added an overall statement in the “Data extraction and risk of bias in individual studies” of the Methods section.

3. There is no mention of a kappa statistic or description of the level of agreement between reviewers (on study selection or quality assessment).

For this point, we added the process for a systematic review, including a description of assessment between authors, in the “Data extraction and risk of bias in individual studies” of the Methods section.

4. The discussion needs to emphasize that many of the changes noted in this review (although statistically significant) were small in terms of absolute magnitude. Most importantly, there should be emphasis on the fact that these outcomes measured here are surrogate outcomes, and not patient important outcomes.

Thank you for your important comment. For this point, we added these points in the “Implications for practice and research” of the Discussion section.

MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISIONS

1. Cochrane is misspelled in the methods section.

We appreciate your reminding us about the misspelling. We have corrected this.
2. Page 7, error (replace selection bias by publication bias)

We appreciate your reminding us about the error. We have corrected this, thank you.

3. Page 8: The subheading "Type of intervention and risk of bias" is weird. These are 2 separate topics and require 2 separate sections.

Thank you for your appropriate suggestion for the subheading. We made 2 separate subheadings and described the topics separately in the Results section.

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited.

The attached paper has been carefully reviewed by an experienced medical editor whose first language is English and who specializes in the editing of papers written by physicians and scientists whose native language is not English. Receiving your comments for the quality of written English, we asked them to check English again most carefully. Please find the attached proofreading certificate for English.

Additional changes were shown in Red font.