Author's response to reviews

Title: Maintenance Interventions for Overweight or Obese Children and Adolescents who participated in a Treatment Program: Study Protocol for a Systematic Review

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Cover letter

Editor in Chief
Systematic Reviews

September 10th, 2014

Dear Editor,

Thank you very much for the advices you and the reviewer gave us to improve our paper. Enclosed you will find our revised manuscript entitled "Maintenance Interventions for Overweight or Obese Children and Adolescents who participated in a Treatment Program: Study Protocol for a Systematic Review". We addressed the comments of the reviewer and provided a point-by-point response to the concerns (see next few pages of this document).

Thank you in advance for your kind consideration to publish this study protocol in your journal.
We are looking forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

L.B. van der Heijden, MD
Reviewer’s report

Title: Maintenance Interventions for Overweight or Obese Children and Adolescents who participated in a Treatment Program: Study Protocol for a Systematic Review

Version: 1

Date: 7 August 2014

Reviewer: caroline Braet

Reviewer’s report:

The authors describe a study protocol for a systematic review of weight maintenance interventions for children and adolescents who participated in weight loss programs. Studies on this topic are still scarce but highly necessary, so reviewing the existing knowledge is of interest. The protocol contains a clear rationale for the study and a detailed description of the methodology. If the study will be conducted following this protocol, I’m confident that it will yield important results. I do have some minor comments the authors might consider:

1. Background:
   a. Since efficacy refers to effects under controlled circumstances while effectiveness refers to effects in real life, the authors should be more precise when stating their aims.
   Textual changes have been made in the 'Background' and 'Objectives' section (page 3 of the revised manuscript).
   b. There is no clear definition of drop-outs and non-responders; so they are used differently in different studies. Authors need to make a good definition of both and they need to assess both in all studies of the review.
   Non-responders are children with overweight or obesity who finished a treatment program but did not participate in the maintenance intervention or initiative. Drop-outs are defined as participants ending the maintenance program or initiative earlier than its normal termination.
   Both non-responders and drop-outs will be assessed in all studies included in the review.
   Adjustments on this have been made in the revised manuscript (page 4, 6).

2. Outcome measures
   a. If pre-weight loss program weight data are available, will these be used, or are the analyses limited to pre- and post-maintenance intervention data?
   If pre-weight loss program weight data are available, these will be described in our paper in order to provide an as complete as possible overview of the patient groups included in the maintenance programs. However, the primary goal of this review is the evaluation of maintenance interventions and initiatives. Therefore, analyses will be limited to pre- and post-maintenance intervention data.

3. p.7: risk of bias: it is more or less clear how the risk of bias will be assessed, but it remains unclear to me how the results of this risk assessment will be taken into account
   We added a comment on this in the revised manuscript (page 7).

4. p. 7, selection bias:
   a. I’m wondering whether and how the representativeness of cohorts will be considered and evaluated?
In cohort studies the representativeness of the exposed cohort will be evaluated using the presented in- and exclusion criteria and selection procedure. Because of the expected clinical heterogeneity of the maintenance cohorts, the cohorts presented in the included reports will be accurately described in our paper. We added this clarification in the revised manuscript (page 8).

5. p. 7: blinding:
a. do the authors mean: ‘when outcome assessors are blinded’ or: ‘when outcome assessors are not blinded’.
   Thank you for this comment. We do mean 'when outcome assessors are blinded'. We changed this in the adjusted manuscript (page 8).
b. How will the impact from concurrent interventions and unintended exposure will be considered and evaluated?
   If described in the included reports, concurrent interventions and unintended exposures will be mentioned in our paper in the overview of relevant reports. Furthermore, we will address these issues when evaluating the obtained results in the Discussion section of our paper. We added these parameters in the section about data extraction on page 7 of the revised manuscript.

6. p.8, treatment effect:
a. will (change in) % overweight be used as second best outcome variable (it is a primary outcome at p.5)?
   Yes, the absolute change in percentage overweight will be used as second best outcome variable. We added this on page 8 of the revised manuscript.

7. p. 10: reporting bias:
a. will colleagues will be inquired about unpublished studies?
   Colleagues will not be inquired about unpublished studies (unless Comment 7c).
b. will trial registers be checked to detect studies that did not result in publications?
   Yes, the subsequent trial registers will be checked: Clinical trials.gov, European trials register, Current controlled trials.
c. will conference presentations and posters be included or considered
   Abstracts of conference presentations and posters will only be included if the results are not published otherwise. In that case the investigators will be inquired about the study details. Comments on 7b and 7c are added in the adjusted manuscript on page 5.
**Editorial requests**

1) Please include a discussion in your abstract.  
We included a discussion section in our abstract.

2) If applicable, please include an acknowledgement section at the end of the manuscript before the reference list. Please acknowledge anyone who contributed towards the study by making substantial contributions to conception, design, acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data, or who was involved in drafting the manuscript or revising it critically for important intellectual content, but who does not meet the criteria for authorship. Please also include the source(s) of funding for all authors. Authors should obtain permission to acknowledge from all those mentioned in the Acknowledgements. Please state clearly whether or not you have funding in the acknowledgement section. If there is no funding, please state this.  
We added an acknowledgement section at the end of the manuscript.  
This study was not externally funded. The part-time PhD salary of the 1st author, Laila van der Heijden, was derived from her medical work at the Department of Pediatrics; the co-authors professor Edith Feskens and Arieke Janse, MD, were also not externally funded and contributed to this work during their bi-weekly supervisor hour.

3) Please include an Authors’ Contributions section at the end of the manuscript, before the reference list. Each author should be listed individually. We suggest the following kind of format (please use initials to refer to each author’s contribution): ‘AB carried out the molecular genetic studies, participated in the sequence alignment and drafted the manuscript. JY carried out the immunoassays. MT participated in the sequence alignment. ES participated in the design of the study and performed the statistical analysis. FG conceived of the study, and participated in its design and coordination and helped to draft the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.’  
An Authors’ Contributions section has been added at the end of the manuscript.