Reviewer's report

Title: A randomised controlled trial of a physical activity and nutrition program targeting middle-aged adults at risk of metabolic syndrome in a disadvantaged rural community

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Reviewer: Maria Luz Fernandez

Reviewer's report:

This paper by Blackford et al describes an intervention for the prevention of metabolic syndrome in middle-aged adults from Australia. The methods appear to be well thought out but there are some concerns before this Major manuscript can be recommended for publication.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. What are the main expectations for this intervention. Do the authors have target levels for some of the parameters that define metabolic syndrome? Do they expect that people who already have metabolic syndrome will be removed from the classification after 6 months. This needs to be discussed somewhere in the manuscript. in other words, what would be the determinants that will allow the authors to state that the interventions was successful.

2. One has to read the whole intervention before authors finally explain what their control group is. It would be better to explain since the beginning what the control group is.

3. It is not clear why the recruitment includes both clearly defined metabolic syndrome and the possibility of recruiting individuals who only present 2 of these characteristics.

4. The cut-offs that are being used for waist circumference are much more restrictive than the ones defined by the ATP criteria (men > 102 cm and women > 88 cm), why such a big discrepancy? I understand about the Asian cutoffs but not the others. Can the authors provide a citation for that criteria so different than the one used in US?

Discretionary revisions

Are the authors going to compare the control group to the intervention group once the former undergoes the same program of exercise and diet?

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

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

No competing interests