Author’s response to reviews

Title: A qualitative analysis exploring preferred methods of peer support to encourage adherence to a Mediterranean Diet in a Northern European population at high risk of Cardiovascular Disease

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Editor Comments:

(1) Please move your 'List of Abbreviations' to before your 'Declarations' section: COMPLETE as per lines 593-607

(2) Please revise your 'Consent for publication' section; if your manuscript contains any individual person’s data in any form (including individual details, images or videos), consent for publication must be obtained from that person, or in the case of children, their parent or legal guardian. If your manuscript does not contain data from any individual person, please state “Not applicable” in this section.: This has been changed to "not applicable" as per line 615
BMC Public Health operates a policy of open peer review, which means that you will be able to see the names of the reviewers who provided the reports via the online peer review system. We encourage you to also view the reports there, via the action links on the left-hand side of the page, to see the names of the reviewers.

Reviewer reports:

Zahra Bahadoran (Reviewer 1): None

Estefania Toledo, MD, MPH, PhD (Reviewer 2): In this paper, Erwin and colleagues have explored the preferred methods of peer support to encourage the adherence to the Mediterranean diet in a Northern Ireland with a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. According to their results, a group-based approach was the most highly rated method of peer support.

The manuscript is nicely written and provides insight into how to appropriately design large intervention studies aiming to increase the adherence to the Mediterranean diet in populations in which the Mediterranean diet is not the traditional dietary pattern. Given the health benefits that may be derived from a higher adherence to the Mediterranean diet, this paper merits attention.

There are, however, some minor issues that may be considered:

- I do not consider that the statistical software that was used to analyse the data has to specified in the abstract: This has been removed (would have been at line 66).

- I would suggest including where the focus groups took place: This has been included in the methods section, lines 154-156. This can also be inserted into the abstract if required.

- the introduction could be shortened: The introduction has been shortened, if the editor would like specific sections to be cut this can be done.

- please, review how the references are referred to in the text: eg. line 151: "[4,5][6,7]" instead of "[4-7]": This has been rectified in this (line 107) and on one other occasion.

- I would suggest using the term type 2 diabetes instead of "Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus" (lines 212-213, e.g.): This has been rectified, line 168-169.

- line 227: please, provide more information on the 8-item MD food frequency questionnaire. Was this brief questionnaire previously validated? Which questions did it include?: More information has been provided regarding the development and content of the MD questionnaire, lines 185-188. The score was based on a previously validated 14-item Mediterranean diet score used in a previous Mediterranean diet intervention. It was shortened for accessibility within the focus group setting and adapted for use in a Northern European population and to include current MD guidelines. A paper by Moore et al. which utilized data from the same focus groups noted
that the questionnaire was not validated could be a limitation of the study into barriers to MD adoption, however I do not believe that is pertinent in this manuscript.


- please, be consistent in the use of abbreviations. The authors have defined the abbreviation MD for Mediterranean diet but they sometimes use the full wording, e.g. lines 502, 561, 605, 620: This has been rectified.

- lines 604-605: according to the ISRCTN registry, the TEAM-MED trial is about to finish in December 2017. Please, review verbal time of this sentence and provide information on how the results from the present work were useful for designing the intervention in the TEAM-MED trial: The registry is in the process of being updated. The final evaluation of the TEAM-MED trial is ongoing and therefore we have chosen the tense as such.

- please, review the references. Sometimes the initial letter is used for the names but sometimes the full name appears (eg. refs 1 and 5). For some authors, the last name starts with lower case lower case (e.g. ref 6). In ref 6, the third author is not correctly referred to. Some last names are misspelled (e.g. ref 10). Some coauthors, volumes and journals are missing (e.g. 13). In some references, the initial of the names appears in lower case letters (e.g. 31,40). Reference 22 does not seem to be complete and it appears all in capital letters: This has been rectified.

- the tables do not appear in successive order:This is due to the editorial guidance: Tables less than one A4 or Letter page in length can be placed in the appropriate location within the manuscript.

Tables larger than one A4 or Letter page in length can be placed at the end of the document text file. Please cite and indicate where the table should appear at the relevant location in the text file so that the table can be added in the correct place during production. As per: https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/submission-guidelines/preparing-your-manuscript