Reviewer's report

Title: Awareness, understanding and use of sodium information labelled on pre-packaged food in Beijing: a cross-sectional study

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Reviewer: Sarah Alderton

Reviewer's report:

I feel that a number of points in this paper require further clarification and elaboration. There were also a number of grammatical errors spotted and I would therefore recommend that someone who speaks English as a first language reads through this paper prior to resubmitting. The terms 'sodium' and 'salt' are used interchangeably throughout the paper. I would recommend that one is picked and used throughout for consistency, and that the difference between salt and sodium is explained at the beginning of the paper so that the reader knows what the difference is to ensure it is clear from the outset, as it is not stated until the discussion. Abstract Line 9 - add 'the' so that it reads "....and use of sodium labelling information among the population in China" instead of "among population in China" Line 14 - not sure what you mean by "optimal level of awareness" - how does surveying people in Beijing reflect this? Are people who live in cities more aware of food labels than those that don't? Please clarify what you mean. Line 27 - add 'of' so that it reads "All of the 380 community residents..." rather than "all the 380 community residents..." Line 31 - remove 'the' so that it reads "19.5% were aware of sodium being listed..." rather than "19.5% were aware of the sodium being listed..." Line 33 - replace the first word on this line 'contents' with 'NIP' Line 49 - change "harm of salt" to "harmful effects of salt" Line 53 - change "Much effort on updating the current..." to "Much effort is need to update the current..." so that it reads better Line 55 - change 'educating' to 'educate' and remove 'is needed' Background Line 5 - add the word 'strategies' after "effective salt reduction" Line 12 - change "2 or 3" to "two or three" Line 14 - Add 'hence' so that sentence begins "Hence, effective salt reduction programs..." Line 18 - Add 'processed' after 'pre-packaged' so that the paragraph begins "Pre-packaged processed foods are the..." Line 20 - Change "Many governments..." to "Some governments..." Line 24 - change 'and/or' after 'sodium' so that sentence starts "Meanwhile, labelling the amount of sodium and/or salt..." Line 29 - add a comma after 'US' Line 33 - Remove 'the' before "pre-packaged food" Line 38 - Expand on this point to explain why/how the food and retail industry is increasing the amount of salt people eat. Is this because sales and consumption of packaged foods has increased among people in China? If so, why? Is it due to increased urbanisation and the shift towards a more Western lifestyle? Line 42 - Change "Nutrition facts labeled in the American food packages" to "Nutrition facts labelled on an American NIP" Line 51 - remove the 's' from 'alcohols' and swap the word 'have' to 'display' Line 53 - replace the word 'an' with 'the' and remove 'is needed' so that the line reads as "the energy content (kJ), as well as the amount of protein (g)..." Line 60 - add a comma after 'NIP' Next page Line 2 - remove 'of' so that it reads "A sample nutrition information panel..." Line 7 - Remove 'the' after 'use of' so that the line reads "use of current sodium labelling..." Line 11 - replace 'on' with 'of'; add 'to' after 'and'; remove the 'd' from 'explored' and replace 'As a with "With the intention" so that line reads "people of these indicators, and to further explore the factors associated with them. With the intention..." Line 13 - remove the 's' from
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26 - Why were these two separate groups of people chosen as participants? Do community residents not shop in supermarkets? Do they shop elsewhere? Line 30 - Please explain what you mean by "convenient urban communities" Line 31 - were the supermarkets all the same or were they different supermarket companies? Line 45 - remove "some instructions on" Line 47 - 51 - not sure you need this sentence that starts "This was very rare among..." so consider removing it Line 52 - add a comma after 'questions' Next page Consider cutting this section down as it is currently quite long. Perhaps submit a blank questionnaire as an appendix so that the reader can see what questions were asked rather than having them written out Line 7 - change 'label' to 'labelling' Line 18 - add a comma after "sodium" so that sentence reads ""Salt" is much more widely understood than "sodium", which is rarely..." Line 20 - not sure what you mean by "mentioned during routine life in China". Do you mean that the term 'sodium' is rarely used in China? Please clarify Line 27 - change 'shorten' to 'shortened' and explain what you mean by this as it is not clear what the Chinese Shortened Term is - do you mean an abbreviation? Line 29 - remove 'And' and begin the sentence "If they were able to say..." and change 'shorten' to 'shortened' Line 31 - change "takes up in recommended" to "takes up out of the recommended" Line 37 - add 'the' before 'nutrition label' and before 'sodium' and replace 'choose food' with "decide which foods to choose". Line 38 - replace 'most of times' with 'the majority of the time' and also quantify what this means. E.g. is it 8 out of 10 times? Line 40 - replace 'the participant was' with "and who were" Line 42 - add in "were considered to use the sodium label" after "packaged food". Please define what you mean by "behavior of salt intake" as I am not sure what this means Line 44 - please explain what six grams is the correct answer to as you do not say Line 49 - remove 'the' after 'evaluate' and add an 's' to 'attitude' and add a comma after the word 'intake' Line 51 - add 'an' before "attitude score" Line 55 - add 'a' before "lower" Line 2 - add an 's' to 'population' Lines 2-6 - would remove the bit about significant differences existing between community residents and shoppers and move it to the results section Line 9 - replace 'was' with 'were' Line 18 - add an 's' to 'label' Results Line 33 - consider rephrasing "while 50 of the 370 shoppers from supermarkets chose not to participate" to "Of the 370 shoppers, 50 chose not to participate,..." Line 35 - Remove the word 'shoppers' Line 42 - Change 'was' to 'were' Line 44 - Please explain what you mean by "control towards salt intake". Do you mean they had good control of their salt intake? If so, in what way? How was this characterised? Line 50 - change 'know' to 'knew' Line 51 - please explain what you mean by "controlling salt intake" - did they avoid adding salt to their food or eat/buy less salty foods? Next page Line 1 - remove the word 'all' Line 4 - add 'the' so that it reads "subgroups of the study population" Line 9 - change 'increasing' to 'increased' Line 11 - change from "details on" to "details of" and add 'the' before the word 'sodium' Line 18 - Add 'the' so that the subheading says "Understanding of the sodium label" Line 32 - add 'a' before the word 'higher' and remove the comma after 'level' Line 34 - add "those who" before the word 'had' so that it reads "...and those who had the behavior of controlling..." Line 39 - Add 'the' before 'sodium' so that the subheading reads as "Use of the sodium label" Line 42 - Add brackets around "i.e. the use rate" Line 44 - Remove "of sodium label defined in this study is 12.6%" so that the line begins with "Univariate analysis..." Discussion Line 2 - remove "of the" after the word 'most' Line 4 - replace 'have' with 'had' Line 6 - Remove "amount of" Line 11 - Add the word 'very' before "few people" Line 13 - change 'shorten' to 'shortened' and remove "of them" after '12.6%' Line 17 - add 's' to 'part' and please explain why you make the statement that "this could be much worse in other parts of China" - is there evidence of a difference, and if so why is that? Please expand on this. Line 19 - change "belief of the harm" to "knowledge about the harmful effects" Line 22 - add 'the' before
"sodium label" and change 'and' to 'or' at the end of the line
Line 26 - change 'could' to 'should' and also consider adding an additional point here to suggest that they educate people about the relationship between salt and sodium and add salt values to labels instead of labelling sodium if this is more familiar, in addition to promoting awareness about the relationship between salt and hypertension
Line 30 - add "how to convert" before the word 'sodium'
Line 32 - add 's' to 'label' and consider adding "to help them make informed choices" to the end of the sentence
Line 39 - remove the word 'salt'
Line 41 - add "in grams of salt" after 'sodium'
Line 43 - replace "is necessary" with "would therefore be prudent"
Line 44 - add "to show salt as well as sodium if this is more familiar, in addition to promoting awareness about the relationship between salt and hypertension"
Line 48 - add 'among' after the word 'even' and 'who' after 'people' so that it reads "In addition, even among people who know the meaning..."
Line 50 to 52 - please explain what you mean by "the amount of all food consumed or to be consumed should be taken into account" - do you mean the total amount eaten across the whole day, or the portion size that they eat?
Line 52 - remove the sentence "This is too complex to common people".
Line 54 - add 'techniques' to line 55 - please give examples of the labelling techniques that could be used, for example colour-coding or use of bold text etc
Line 57 - add 'the' before "sodium label"

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Line 2 - add 'the' before "sodium label" and replace "the understanding" with "better understanding"
Line 4 - add 'the' before "sodium label"
Line 7 - add 'the' before "sodium label"
Line 9 - replace "transfer to" with "result in them"
Line 11 - remove "about salt". You may need to reconsider this sentence, as earlier in the discussion you say that the public have a good basic knowledge about salt and harmful effects on health, whereas here you are suggesting there is a lack of awareness. Could there be other reasons for these results?
Line 13 - change "NIP in" to "NIP on", change "food package" to 'pack' and remove 'the' before "front-of-pack" so that it reads "In addition to the traditional NIP on the back of pack, front-of-pack...
"Line 15 - remove 'the' before "sodium information"
Line 18 - add 'voluntary' before 'hybrid'
Line 20 - add 's' to the word 'display' and add "(green)" after the word 'low'
Line 22 - add "(amber)" after 'medium' and "(red)" after 'high'
Line 26 - add "in helping them" after the word 'consumers' and change the beginning of the next sentence from "On the other hand" to "In addition," Line 28 - remove "be able to" and "the" Line 38 - add 'voluntary' before "front-of-pack system" and add the word 'intakes' after 'reference'
Line 40 - change "in" to 'on'
Line 44 - Change beginning of sentence to "Assisting consumers to..."
Line 46 - Change 'Multiple' to 'Other'
Line 48 - Add "For example," before "with the availability" and add an 's' to the word 'smartphone'
Line 53 - add commas before and after the word 'FoodSwitch'
Line 55 - remove "only need to!" Line 57 - add "colour-coded" after "traffic light"
Line 58 - change the first word 'and' to 'with'

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Line 2 - change "choose food low in sodium" to "choose foods lower in sodium" and remove the 's' from the second 'food' on that line
Line 9 - The FoodSwitch app has since been rolled out in other countries, including China. When did it launch there? Was it before this survey was carried out? You could add this to this paragraph to explain how it has since been rolled out in other countries, including China, and can be used to help consumers identify healthier choices lower in salt
Line 17 - remove "of salt reduction"
Line 18 - replace "contribute small" with "only have a small effect on salt reduction"
Line 22 - You could add in here about the possibility of targeting children in schools to help reduce salt intakes in children and their families - there is a paper written by He et al which talks about the effectiveness of the EduSalt programme trialled in China, which may be of interest and worth referencing here
Line 24 - Give some examples at the end of this sentence of the comprehensive strategies that could be implemented. For example, highlighting the salt content of everyday food items, encouraging people not to add salt to their food and setting Government targets for salt in food etc
Line 29 - change 'would' to 'to'

Line 33 - You say the study sample is not
population based and renders the results less generalisable. You could add in here the differences in the participants e.g. that 51% had hypertension and 40% had CVD which could explain why they were more aware of the harmful effects of salt, as they may have been informed about this by their healthcare professional or any health information and advice they have read or received. Also highlight the differences in income and gender - the majority of participants were female. Do you think that the results would be different if it was a more equal split of men and women, or if predominantly men had been recruited to take part? If so, what might these differences have been and how might they be more or less generalisable? Line 40 - change 'overestimated' to 'overestimating'. Line 42 - add 'the' after the words "use of". Line 44 - add a comma after the word 'consumption'. Line 46 - add an 's' to the word 'label'. Also you may want to suggest here what you would measure in a future study. Would you measure their salt intake before and after to see if salt intake decreased? Conclusions Line 51 - change 'harm' to "harmful effects". Line 53 - change "but the awareness" to "but that awareness" and add an 's' to the word 'label'. Line 58 - add an 's' to the word 'label' and consider adding a point to the end of this sentence about considering clearer ways of displaying such information on food labels/NIPs in order to help reduce population salt intakes.

Table 1 Line 7 - Change the word 'do' to 'does'. Line 18 - remove 'the'.

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

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