Author’s response to reviews

Title: Title: A systematic review on associations between dietary factors and obesity-related biomarkers - numerous limitations seem to impede current research on childhood obesity

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Editor,

Thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to revise our manuscript. We have revised the manuscript according to the reviewer comments. All changes in the manuscript are highlighted using yellow highlighted text.

Comment 1: Could the authors please clarify how many people completed each stage if the search was updated in 2016 then please just report that this is the end date or why the rationale to say it was searched then updated, more succinct to say the first (title and abstract; full text screening data extraction)

Response: We thank the reviewer for this comment and now report the updated search as our final screening date (2016/02/29). We have revised this accordingly in the main article (see lines 103-104) as well as in the flow chart (see Figure 1; highlighted in red) and also in the documentation of the search strategy (Supplement 1). In addition, we have added information on how many people were involved in the different stages of the literature review (e.g., abstract/full-text selection, quality assessment…) to clarify this issue (see lines 118-134, 129, and 137).

Comment 2: please add justification for the choice in quality tool chosen as this is not a standard tool.

Response: We agree with the reviewer that our quality assessment tool is not a standard tool to evaluate study quality in systematic reviews. However, as we were interested to find out reasons for inconclusive findings among nutrition studies, we think that these standard tools do not take into account important aspects that are specific for nutrition research (e.g., tools used to assess dietary intake, how often dietary intake was measured…). We therefore looked for a quality assessment tool that had been used in nutrition research before and would take such specific
criteria into account. We found the assessment tool developed by Voortman et al. 2015 and as the study was conducted in a similar context than our study, we decided to use this tool. We have added a justification for using this quality assessment tool into the method section (see lines 143-148).

Comment 3: Could the authors please separate out the results and discussion as per standard journal format? or provide substantial justification why they should be combined?

Response: We thank the reviewer for this advice and are now providing the results and the discussion as a section in the article (see lines 169 and 221)

Comment 4: the authors note in the review that some papers were included but some were data from the same study, this is not currently worded in this way in the flow diagram. the flow diagram needs to reflect the text.

Response: We suppose, the reviewer comment is related to our statement on multiple subentries (observations) from one article (see line 152). These observations (n=1,111) were extracted from the 81 articles (as stated in the results section on line 179). We agree that this information was not included in the flow chart and therefore revised the flow chart accordingly (see updated flow chart; Figure 1).