Author’s response to reviews

Title: NUTRITION AND CULINARY IN THE KITCHEN PROGRAM: A RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED INTERVENTION TO PROMOTE COOKING SKILLS AND HEALTHY EATING IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS-STUDY PROTOCOL

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RESPONSE TO REVIEWERS

Dear editor and reviewers,

We thank you for your analyses and contributions to our manuscript “NUTRITION AND CULINARY IN THE KITCHEN PROGRAM: A RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED INTERVENTION TO PROMOTE COOKING SKILLS AND HEALTHY EATING IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS - STUDY PROTOCOL” (NUTJ-D-17-00094).

We report our considerations below. Your comments are in italics and our responses are in color blue. In the manuscript, all changes are highlighted in color blue.

Reviewer #1:

This is an article of particular interest to those working with cooking-based interventions as well as those interested in nutrition education for young adults. The adaptation of an existing curriculum to another notably different cultural context (country, language, cuisine) was a unique aspect, previously not published in other work in this field. This work would offer interesting contributions to the field, particularly given the relatively long-post intervention follow-up period.
Answer: We appreciate the acknowledgement and your valuable suggestions for improvement. Changes related to your following comments are reported below. We would like to emphasize that we have registered the study following the editorial policy of the Nutrition Journal at the WHO International Clinical Trials Registry Platform, in Brazilian Clinical Trials Registry. The trial registration number (RBR-8nwxh5) were included in the last line of the manuscript abstract (line 55, page 3, current) and at page 21, lines 502-503 (current). We also changed the expression “longitudinal” in the manuscript to “with six months of follow-up” or “sustained impact” once this agree with the information present at the Brazilian Clinical Trials Registry.

Specific comments:

Line 73: There is contrasting literature that suggests weight gain may be due to maturation/social responsibilities, rather than university attendance (aka non-university students gain similar amounts of weight). One example is by Baum, C. (2017). Demography. "The Effects of College on Weight: Examining the "Freshman 15" Myth and Other Effects of College Over the Life Cycle".

Answer: Thank you for your suggestion. We agree and have modified this paragraph, including the other point of view related to weight gain in university students. We excluded the Brunt & Rhee (2008) paper and we included the recently paper by Baum (2017) in lines 66-69, page 3 (current).

Line 80: "possible decline" of cooking skills—this has not been sufficiently tracked to be established. Changes in time use are more well-established, as are food purchasing habits, or the prevalence of cooking lessons within secondary education. However, claiming large shifts in skills is questionable given historical gender divisions in classes, for example. I believe Lyons (?) published an intergenerational comparison of women showing negligible change in Scotland.

Answer: Thank you for your suggestion. We agree with you once the changes on cooking skills are also related to social changes, such as lack of time, availability of ready meal and processed foods, and cooking lessons at secondary schools, not only related to declining of cooking skills. In this sense, we modified all paragraph to clarify these relations (page 4, lines 80-84, current).

Line 103: spell out "US"

Answer: Thank you for your suggestion. We spell “United States” in line 101 (page 5, current) and in Abstract.

Line 138: Nice list identifying changes to the CWC program.

Answer: Thank you.

Line 124: Specify the type of validation of the instrument.
Answer: Thank you for your suggestion. We included the type of validation of the Cooking with a Chef program instrument (page 5,6, lines 121-122, current).


Answer: Thank you for your suggestion. We agreed with you and we excluded repetitive information in theses sentences (page 7, begin line 160 current).

Line 174: Specify why theoretical foundations are important.

Answer: Thank you for your suggestion. We added the importance of theoretical foundations for interventions related to health behaviour (page 7-8, lines 171-174, current).

Line 175-177: Awkward—rephrase to clarify.

Answer: Thank you for your suggestion. We agree and have modified this sentence (page 8, line 171-173, current).

Line 178-181: Rephrase—these are awkward and unclear.

Answer: Thank you for your suggestion. We agree and have modified this sentence (page 8, line 174-177, current).

Line 181-183: 1) Specify why practice is necessary; 2) tie clearly to the theory/effective use of behavior; 3) provide some details in terms of what learned behaviors are practiced in NCK classes (i.e. knife skills of slicing, dicing, etc for about 20 minutes in class 1). This could be added to a table or just a few examples inserted.

Answer: Thank you for your suggestion. We showed why practice is necessary at the Discussion of manuscript, when we said, “Studies have suggested that changes in behaviours, attitudes and knowledge about cooking are more substantial among those who have had hands-on cooking classes when compared to those who only participated in expository lectures or classes with a specific interface, as a television [29, 30, 31, 71]”. However, it was not clear in our Method, so we added these details in the current lines 177-188, page 8.

Line 202: Great to see a study with a six-month follow up period!

Answer: Thank you for the acknowledgement.

Line 231: Ensure the program citation meets journal standards.

Answer: Thank you for your observation. We looked at Nutrition Journal guidelines and we had to make changes in citation (page 10, lines 239-240, current).

Line 240-242: Wordy and awkward—rewrite and streamline.
Answer: Thank you for your suggestion. We agree and have modified this sentence (page 11, line 243-244, current). As background information we provided the following explanation to our criteria. Note: this is repeated on this document for Reviewer 2.

We included these criteria because this study is part of a larger project that involved the validation of the evaluation instrument on cooking skills and healthy eating practices. Based on the viability of the study, we worked with a subsample of the sample that participated in the validation stage of the instrument. This sample was representative of students who were regularly enrolled and started studying their first year in an onsite undergraduate course in a public Brazilian university. Their contact with the instrument during their intervention program occurred nine months after the instrument validation period. Thus it is possible that some students did not remember it. In this sense, we believe that this would not prejudice the generalization to other students.

Line 246: Consider a flow chart to describe recruitment/selection if space allows.

Answer: Thank you for your suggestion. We agree and added the flow diagram of participant recruitment during the trial according to CONSORT at Figure 1 (page 11; lines 248-249 and is provided in the uploaded Figure 1 document).

Line 270: What is a "business location"? Describe more specifically as a supermarket, grocery store, district of specialty shops, open air market, etc.

Answer: Thank you for your suggestion. We described the type of business location and we substituted ―popular food market‖ which was a field experience class tour (page 12, line 276 current.). We refer to this class as a selection and purchase workshop (line 275).

Line 290: "additional criteria" are important—list all.

Answer: Thank you for your suggestion. We already had included additional criteria. So, we rewrote to clarify this sentence (page 12-13, line 294-295, current).

Line 313: This is a high staff:student ratio. It may be worth discussing later in terms of the replicability of the curriculum.

Answer: Thank you for your suggestion. While it is a high staff:student ratio, we believed that this approach is important for the development of hands-on cooking classes. As strategy for the program implementation on the curriculum we suggest empowering interested students for replicability of hands-on cooking classes. We included this discussion in the page 14, lines 321-325 (current) and in the page 19, first full paragraph lines 447-451 (current).

Line 340: Nice detail on the thorough translation process.

Answer: Thank you for the acknowledgement.

Line 433: Describe setting (home kitchen) earlier instead of introducing in the discussion.
Answer: Thank you for your suggestion. We added information about setting in the Method (page 11, lines 266-268, current) and excluded part of the sentence in the Discussion (page 19, line 455, current).

Line 446: Describe use of tablets earlier.

Answer: Thank you for your suggestion. We added information about use of tablets in the Method (page 15, lines 356-359, current).

Discussion comments: Generally, it would be more helpful to the reader if the most important strengths and limitations were selected and discussed with more depth. The current discussion is a little scattered, with everything but the kitchen sink.

Answer: Thank you for your suggestion. We excluded some less important strengths and limitations (between lines 434-435, 446-449, and 451-454, in the first version of manuscript). We also discussed with more depth some paragraphs such as in lines 423-432 and 447-451 (current).

Final comments: This is an interesting article with a nice selection of references key to the subject area. However, it needs revision and careful proofreading prior to re-submission as there are also a number of minor grammatical errors.

Answer: Thank you for your thorough review. This has been very helpful for our revisions. We apologize for our mistakes. The co-author (native English speaker) has continued to update and review this manuscript throughout the revision stages. Finally, we add that we have standardized the name of program “Cooking with a Chef” (CWC) throughout the manuscript.

Reviewer #2:

The submitted manuscript "NUTRITION AND CULINARY IN THE KITCHEN PROGRAM: A RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED INTERVENTION TO PROMOTE COOKING SKILLS AND HEALTHY EATING IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS - STUDY PROTOCOL" presents the study protocol planned for a randomized controlled intervention to promote cooking skills and healthy eating in Brazilian students. It is a very interesting program, which have followed methodological care to adapt an existing intervention to the Brazilian population, based on a American program.

Answer: We appreciate the acknowledgement and your valuable suggestions for improvement. Changes related to your following comments are reported below.

Some aspects need to be clarified, however, before it is ready for publication.

1. English revision is required to clarify some parts of the manuscript.
Answer: Thank you for your thorough review. We have added a careful English language revision to the manuscript.

2. Proper registration of the trial is required following the editorial policy of the journal: 
guideline: https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__www.biomedcentral.com_getpublished_editorial-2Dpolicies-23trial-2Bregistration&d=DwIGaQ&c=Ngd-ta5yRYsqeUsEDgxhcqsYYY1Xs5ogLxWPA_2Wlc4&r=bKVREZp3I3-IpGb7J6SQczQqNB14rtTnXBlJXCsssn4&m=O3YogfVEmpDJR1iT7ewVnxXOHHnsA1uLsJ8uk4eOE&s=VroUebdEZpi29nYJ8OxZNhJ6PVX33edV_M2hKIM2GYY&e=
The number provided is for the ethical approval.

Answer: Thank you for your suggestion. We registered the study following the editorial policy of the Nutrition Journal at the WHO International Clinical Trials Registry Platform, in Brazilian Clinical Trials Registry. The trial registration number (RBR-8nwxh5) was included in the last line of the manuscript abstract (page 3, line 54, current) and at page 21, lines 492-493 (current). We also changed the expression “longitudinal” in the manuscript to “with six months of follow-up” or “sustained impact” as this agrees with the information present at the Brazilian Clinical Trials Registry.

3. Review spirit guideline accordingly. Items presented as NA, can be actually missing.

Answer: Thank you for your suggestion. We reviewed Spirit guideline and we excluded NA items (Additional file 1 – SPIRIT - Checklist).

4. Description of the study protocol in future and past form makes the reading of the manuscript not easy. By the time, the manuscript should be published the all trial should be over. Therefore, may be more appropriate to use past tense. If unsure about possible modifications in the study protocol, it should wait for publishing, perhaps.

Answer: Thank you for your suggestion. We changed all the verb tenses to past tense. Furthermore, only in the “Statistical analysis” and in some paragraphs within the “Discussion” we keep the verbs in future tense. We have noted this to be acceptable practice as in other Study protocols published in Nutrition Journal. Once these analyses and results are conducted we will be able to use past tense as we proceed with our work.

5. Abstract:

* As done for the introduction, the rationale for evaluating university students should be clearer in the abstract.
Answer: Thank you for your suggestion. We added the rationale for evaluating university students (page 2, Line 29-31, current) and reviewed the abstract for the appropriate word length.

* Clarify outcome measure vii) self-efficacy for using fruits, vegetables, and seasonings

Should be: self-efficacy for using fruits, vegetables, and seasonings while cooking?

Answer: Thank you for your suggestion. This is the original name of scale, but to clarify we added your suggestion word choice between parentheses (page 2, line 41, current).

6. Introduction

* P5. Line 80-82 "Within this context, studies have discussed that the possible decline within individuals' cooking skills."... It is not clear to what decline is referring, within this context.

Answer: Thank you for your suggestion. We excluded the term “within this context” to clarify the sentence. Also, we made changes in this paragraph based on the suggestions of Reviewer #1 (page 4, lines 75-86, current).

* P5. Line 91 "Reicks et al. [23] added the topic of evaluation of the health impact of home food preparation (cooking) on adults to the body of literature" Unclear sentence. English revision.

Answer: Thank you for your suggestion. We changed this sentence to clarify (page 4, lines 90-92, current).

* P7 Line 138 "Internship to follow the original CWC program during five months": who did the internship: one main researcher? More than one person?

Answer: Thank you for your suggestion. We added this information on page 6, lines 135-136 (current). GLB is the main researcher and she completed the five month internship at Clemson University with the Cooking with a Chef program leaders.

* P8 Line 167-170 repeats information mentioned in the sentence above.

Answer: Thank you for your suggestion. We agreed with you and we excluded repetitive information in theses sentences (page 7, line 169-165, current).

7. Methods:

* The second including criteria is not clear to me "(2) having participated in the validation stage of the evaluation instrument on cooking skills and healthy eating practices;" Why was judged necessary this criteria? Would this hamper the generalization to other students, who have not had any contact with the instrument?
Answer: Please note that this response was provided earlier in this document (p3) at the request of Reviewer 1 (line 240-242). Thank you for your question. We included these criteria because this study is part of a larger project that involved the validation of the evaluation instrument on cooking skills and healthy eating practices. Based on the viability of the study, we worked with a subsample of the sample that participated in the validation stage of the instrument. This sample was representative of students who were regularly enrolled and started studying their first year in an onsite undergraduate course in a public Brazilian university. Their contact with the instrument during their intervention program occurred nine months after the instrument validation period. Thus it is possible that some students did not remember it. In this sense, we believe that this would not prejudice the generalization to other students.

* About the "Control group participants were informed that they would take part in the intervention program after answering online surveys in three distinct moments..." Will this in fact be done? Clarify in the text.

Answer: Thank you for your question. The control group participants will be invited to participate in the program intervention at the next stage of study. We clarified this point in the text, page 9, lines 209-210 (current).

* Cooking class 2: Getting to know the importance of including more fruits and vegetables in the diet daily lists recipes that do not necessary include fruits and vegetables. Can you clarify how was this in fact done? Maybe present the recipes in supplemental material?

Answer: Thank you for your suggestion. We would like to clarify that all recipes were prepared from scratch, including recipes based on fruits and vegetables within each of the five cooking classes. We completed information about the recipes on Table 2 and added details about the recipes on page 13, lines 297- 299 (current). However, we cannot provide the recipes within supplemental material as the NCK Program is within a patent process at the present time.

8. Discussion:

Can you guarantee that control group will not be influenced by the intervention group? Do you have the information if some of the participants do not live together? That should be discussed as possible limitation, if not controlled.

Answer: Thank you for your question. We agree that we cannot guarantee that each of the control group participants will not be influenced by the proceedings of the intervention group. The groups were from the same University. However, the chosen university has 50,000 people among professors, employees, and students who circulate every day on campus. Thus, the likelihood of students meeting and thus influencing their individual culinary skills may be less threatening and somewhat diminished. We therefore believe that this is a limitation of community-based intervention type studies. We have added this discussion one page 18, lines 423-432 (current).
We appreciate the contributions of this review process to improve our manuscript. We thank the Editor and Reviewers for their very constructive comments. These have certainly enhanced the manuscript’s readability and clarity. Sincerely, The authors