Author’s response to reviews

Title: Prevalence of obesity and overweight and its associated factors among registered pensioners in Ghana; a cross sectional studies

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Date: 18th May 2017

Author’s Response to reviews

Dear Dr. Asnawi Abdullah

Thank you for the opportunity to revise this manuscript. I am writing on behalf of the authors to submit our revised version. We have addressed all reviewers’ queries, comments and suggestions.

We sincerely appreciate the time, efforts and kind contribution of your reviewers, which made this version of the manuscript better.

Please find below our point-by-point response and actions taken

Asnawi Abdullah, PhD (Reviewer 1):

The article examines the risk factors associated with obesity among pensioners in Ghana. Interesting, only few studies emphasis on pensioners. This study will improve our understanding on risk factors of obesity. However, a number of point should be address first.

1. In the introduction, it will be great if statistical figures of obesity/overweight also emphasis on elderly (pensioners) instead of the statistical figure of general population.

Thank you for your suggestion. It was difficult getting current Ghanaian and African statistics of obesity among the elderly. Some statistical figures of obesity among the elderly have been incorporated. (Background, paragraph 3, line 10, page 4)

2. In the second paragraph, lines 43-46, the author highlighted between overweight/obesity and chronic diseases such as hypertension, cholesterol, coronary disease, etc.; in other words, obesity is considered as a risk factor. However, this paper analyzed the opposite way, the obesity was not considered as a risk factor but the outcome. It should be clarified and justified in the background clearly. Clinical pathway associated with obesity and chronic diseases.

We accepted this suggestion and subsequently revised to give clarification and the necessary justification. (Background section, paragraph 2, line 1 – 10, page 3)
3. It should be clarified about P value used in Table 4. What P value presented in the table 4. P value for trend analysis? What is different with P value use in Table 6. I.e. OR for current age. For table 5 and table 6, again it should be clear understanding clinical pathway factor associated with obesity and chronic diseases.

Edited and corrections made to table 4, 5 and 6

4. In line 36 conclusion heading, the authors conclude physical exercise among the elderly in Ghana population may have limited benefit in reducing the prevalence of obesity. This statement is quite interesting, but it seems beyond the focus of this paper and no evidence presented in the results.

We are grateful to you for drawing our attention to this. We edited the conclusion and deleted the statement.

Ofori-Asenso R (Reviewer 2): Review Comments

Thank you very much for your comments and rich input that would improve on the quality of the paper.

1. Abstract: The use of "several problems" is a bit vague. Pls consider revising and making emphasis on health problems.

We agree perfectly with you. Thank you for pointing this to us. We have therefore revised to make emphasis on the health problems as suggested. (Abstract, line 1, page 2)

2. Background: Some references in the background information are not appropriate and need to be changed. Pls see below;

I. The Britwum et al study (ref#2) that has been referenced to the statement "In Ghana, the population of elderly aged 60 years and above is about 7% and is expected to reach 12% by 2050" is not appropriate. Consider changing to a more authoritative source such as the World Population prospects 2015 revision (https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/)

We gladly accept this recommendation. We therefore revised the statement to conform to that of an authoritative source. (Background section, line 3, page 3)
II. Line 17-18 that reads "There are several problems of the elderly with very few elderly living a disease free life" needs to be revised. Please be more specific to help the reader understand that you are talking about health challenges.

Thank you for pointing this out. We have subsequently revised the statement making it more specific as highlighted in background section, line 6, and further specified in paragraph 2, line 4, page 3.

III. Reference #6 that has been referenced to the sentence line #24 "the elderly has many medical problems" is not appropriate and needs to be changed. As indicated above it will also be essential to make some mention of some of the medical conditions being referred to here. Obesity is often linked to other chronic diseases so examples will help readers.

We sincerely appreciate your suggestion, which we deem appropriate. As such the reference #6 has been dropped and replaced with a more authoritative source. Also, examples of the chronic disease has been mentioned as found in background section, paragraph 2, line 4, page 3.

IV. It's unclear what the authors mean by "Overweight and obesity accounts for a significant proportion of the non-communicable diseases like hypertension, diabetes mellitus and many others"... The authors should try and cite more authoritative sources. The recent analysis by the NCD risk factor collaboration (http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(16)30054-X/abstract) may be cited to support the statement regarding increasing trends in global obesity.

The statement has been reviewed to state that “overweight and obesity are known risk factors...” and the more authoritative source suggested cited to support the increasing trend of global obesity (background, paragraph 3, line 5, page 4).

V. The authors make reference to a systematic review published in 2008 by Abubakari et al. This systematic review although useful is less relevant for the Ghanaian context as nearly 50% of the study participants were Nigerians.

The phrase referring to the said systematic review was deleted.

VI. I am also unsure why the authors chose to reference the single survey by Biritwum (2005) which is over 10 years old. A more comprehensive systematic review and meta-analysis has recently been published https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5148846/. Based
on 43 studies, the authors estimated the national prevalence of overweight and obesity as, 25.4% and 17.1%, respectively. Please revise the stated obesity and overweight prevalence for Ghana and reference this study.

We edited as suggested and the recent systematic and meta-analysis cited (Background, paragraph 4, line 1, page 4)

VII. The last paragraph of the background section need to be reworded to make the objectives of the study clearer.

Edited as suggested (Background, last paragraph, line 1, page 4)

3. In the results section, please provide what the response rate was.

The response rate was provided as suggested. (Results section, paragraph 1, line 1, page 8)

The discussion section needs to be strengthened in terms of highlighting what the implications of this study are.

Implications of the study were included in the discussion as suggested. (Discussion section, last paragraph, line 14, page 14)

The study also notes major variations in obesity/overweight across regions and ethnic groups. The authors need to comment on these and explain what may have been the likely causes.

Edited and suggestions included. (Discussions, paragraph 4, line 1, page 13)

The authors need to discuss if there are existing programs within the Ghana health service that seek to address the growing challenge of overweight and obesity among Ghanaians. If there are non-existent the authors need to suggest what should be done and how this could be integrated into existing programs.

This has been included in the discussion (Discussion section, last paragraph, line 1, page 14)

Yours sincerely,

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