Reviewer's report

Title: Older Australians can adhere to a traditional Mediterranean style diet over two weeks: a pilot dietary intervention study

Version:2 Date: 6 August 2015

Reviewer: Michael Georgoulis

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Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Line 151: A brief description of the semi-quantitative checklist used should be provided in the Methods section of the manuscript with emphasis on the items (foods and food groups) incorporated. Therefore, the description in lines 336-340 of the Discussion section could be omitted.

2. Lines 171-189: Although the intervention diet was based on the nutrient profile derived from author’s unpublished review, it would be more helpful to provide the recommended (daily or weekly) servings of foods and food groups across the 3 energy levels of the Australianised Mediterranean diet, to facilitate readers’ understanding of the dietary intervention and the results regarding participants’ adherence to the Mediterranean diet. This could be presented in a Table, possibly instead of Table 1 (which could be provided as a supplementary material regarding the nutrient composition of the intervention diet according to authors’ unpublished work). In addition, the review of the Mediterranean diet’s composition is stated to have taken place in 2015, whereas the dietary intervention was applied in 2013.

3. Linked to my previous comment, why did authors choose to present data only the Mediterranean diet’s content in potassium, folate and vitamin C and not calcium, ferrum or other micronutrients? Was the design of the intervention diet (and therefore adoptions in recommended food servings across the three different energy intake levels) based solely on these three micronutrients?

4. Lines 229-258: It would be helpful if authors reported, besides Cohen’s d effect size, on the statistical significance of the difference between participants’ baseline and end-of-study body weight, BMI and dietary intake, using appropriate statistical analyses, in order to highlight the actual effect of their dietary intervention. Similarly, statistically significant differences between the results of the two dietary assessment methods should be provided, either in the text or in Table 6, using appropriate statistical analyses. For instance, the decrease in protein intake is indeed greater according to the WFR (-2.75) but is it significantly different from the decrease according to the FFQ (-1.11)? If such analyses are applied they should also be mentioned in the Methods section.

5. Line 283: It is stated that some participants lived alone or that they were members of the same household. This should be stated as a limitation of the study, given that it has an obvious effect on the palatability of the Mediterranean diet.
diet.

6. The Discussion section could be improved if shortened and made more focused on the interpretation of the main findings of the study. Authors should try not to describe the tools used in the study or repeat their results in the Discussion section. They should give more emphasis on the palatability of the Mediterranean diet and the reasons why the adoption of this dietary pattern could be feasible in a non-Mediterranean population, as well as the beneficial changes in dietary intake due to their intervention, all supported by appropriate bibliography in other populations.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Table 2 could be omitted and a brief description of the baseline characteristics of the whole study sample could be included in the text (mean ± SD age, height, weight and BMI).

2. Tables 4 and 5 could be provided as supplementary material, since differences in participants’ dietary intake between the habitual diet phase and the Mediterranean diet phase are clearly presented in Table 6, along with the comparison of the two different dietary assessment methods. Table 6 could stand alone in the main text if Cohen’s d effect size was added for the mean change in dietary intake according to the WFR and the FFQ. In addition, please add «kJ from PUFA» in Table 6 and check that all abbreviations used are defined in the Tables’ notes and with unique superscripts (e.g., CHO is not defined in Tables 4, 5 and 6, superscript c in Table 6 is common for SFA and CHO, etc.).

3. Generally, the manuscript is a bit long and would benefit from being more concise and focused on the main objective of the study, e.g. the palatability of the Mediterranean diet in a non-Mediterranean population. Some ideas for shortening the manuscript have been presented in the abovementioned comments.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.