14 June 2014

The Editor

Prof Demetre Labadarios

South African Journal of Clinical Nutrition

Dear Demetre

I have indicated below in blue how we addressed the comments of the reviewers. We have also changed the title of the paper as it is more appropriate than the previous one.

Kind regards

Edelweiss Wentzel-Viljoen

**Reviewer A:**
GENERAL
The paper provides the reader with the latest evidence regarding salt restriction and hypertension and makes an important contribution to the FBDG on salt intake.  The paper is well written with few typographical, syntax and grammatical errors.
Corrected

CONTENT
The paper starts with a short introduction to highlight the current focus on salt restriction in reducing blood pressure. There is however no statement of the objectives of the review and the authors should state this early on.
Aim of the paper added

The content is to a large extent based on evidence from meta-analysis of controlled trials (most of them from He et al.) and cohort studies.  The authors should consider including the latest meta-analysis of He at al. [Effect of longer term modest salt reduction on blood pressure: Cochrane systematic review and meta-analysis of randomised trials. BMJ 2013;346:f1325 doi: 10.1136/bmj.f1325; Published 5 April 2013] and Aburto et al. [Effect of
lower sodium intake on health: systematic review and meta-analyses. BMJ
2013;346:f1326 doi: 10.1136/bmj.f1326; Published 5 April 2013].
Added both publications

In general the message is clearly communicated but one wonders about the clinical significance as opposed to the statistical significance of salt restriction and the respective places of salt restriction and anti-hypertensive drugs.
Addressed in text

It would add to the value of the paper if the authors could include a brief explanation of the underlying mechanism explaining the effect of sodium restriction on blood pressure, as well as the concept of salt-sensitive hypertension.
Addressed in text

The authors should give a reference for the definition of hypertension (line 46).
Added

REFERENCES
The references are relevant and up to date.
New references added
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**Reviewer B:**
Introduction
Although Hypertension is the heading of the next paragraph, I think there is a need for a statement in the introductory paragraph on the purpose for salt reduction - either as a statement on salt intake or statement on BP in SA.
Added

Line 60:  "levels, as well as increasing.."
Line 78-85:  Consider making mention of the possible programming effect of high salt intake.
Line 157:  "Dietary methods used to assess .."
Line 166:  "Furthermore, dietary surveys do not .."
Line 181:  "Humans are genetically.."
Line 194-195:  "Canada it is estimated that more than .... including foods and meals that are served in restaurants.
Line 317:  write our salt (or sodium) instead of Na as up till now Na was not used
All corrected

Line 345-353:  are you making the recommendation that sodium instead of salt should be used on labels??
No, because the current labelling regulations (R146) only allows sodium

Perhaps consider a recommendations in this section - to simplify the consumer education, foods with a sodium content exceeding any of the cut-points may be typed in a different colour (or the block be coloured) in the table as an alternative to signposting the product.
We know that the Dept of Health, Directorate: Nutrition is not keen to do this

Line 405:  ".take a number of years to be implemented and need ."
Corrected

General:
The term salt and sodium is used interchangeably.  Perhaps authors would like to reconsider this approach and only use sodium when they actually refer to sodium.  According to Tiberio et al (2012) it is not only sodium but actually salt per se that has an effect (at least on hypertension).
Addressed in the beginning of the article