

JAND Reviewer Instructions: Systematic Review / Narrative Review / Scoping Review

Please use the reporting checklist that accompanies the manuscript submission to ensure that the research has been reported completely and transparently. Please check that each checklist item has been reported satisfactorily. This will help you to determine if the research has been conducted and reported appropriately with sufficient rigor.

Following is an example of reviewer comments for your reference.

Sample Reviewer Comments:

Overall Reviewer Comments:

The focus is interesting and timely; however, several weaknesses diminish enthusiasm for the paper. The authors frame the review as an update but don't provide any context, for example, whether they are updating a prior review and if so, the years covered by the review, and the years covered in this study. While the authors provided a good review of the potential biologic pathways of this association, their analysis and insights of the current studies done to-date was lacking. The authors essentially just report some of the findings from some of the papers. Several opportunities are missed for analysis, insight, and discussion. I suggest that the authors focus on providing a stronger critical evaluation of the studies included in this review to inform interpretation of variation across studies as well as areas of consensus.

Specific Reviewer Comments:

Title

The title language should not imply directionality of the relationship.

The title does not sufficiently reflect the study aim and is broader than is appropriate for what the scope of this review is.

Research Snapshot

The Research Question needs to be in the form of a question.

The Research Question stated lacks specificity to best capture the outcomes that are included in the studies reviewed.

Abstract

Language suggests all the results in the systematic review are intervention/experimental. However, the review includes observational research. The language should be altered to reflect that composition of all the studies included.

Line 25 – Methods- Add the publication inclusive dates for the searches

Line 33 – Results - Clarify for both observational studies and RCT what the outcomes were for the specific diets assessed.

Introduction

More discussion of previous epidemiologic research, meta-analyses, and systematic reviews is needed.

What sets this study apart from the other systematic reviews that were cited?

While relevant literature is referred to and the topic and health problem is introduced, the overall flow and structure of the introduction could be much improved. There is some repetition of points between paragraphs and there is a lack of justification included for a specific focus of the review.

Lines 68 - 72 – The references chosen to provide background seem somewhat random. Many of these references are extremely old and specific to certain populations. There have been much more recent studies finding similar relationships.

Line 88 – Need a citation for this statement

Lines 99 - 105 – Study aim - Can a review determine if something impacts something else? Or simply summarize the evidence base within defined parameters?

Methods

Line 108: The search terms in general seem a bit vague.

Line 111 – Additional search filters (for adults and/or human based studies) were used in Medline or Web of Science that would generally be discouraged as this relies on adequate indexing of all the articles in the databases and some relevant articles may have been excluded.

Line 116 – As specified in the PRISMA checklist item #8, please present the full electronic search strategy for at least one database, including any limits used, such that it could be repeated. This can be provided as a supplementary figure.

Line 120 – Include inclusive publication dates for the searches

Line 128 – The eligibility criteria need to be summarized in the text. Nowhere in the text are any age limits provided, description of other limits on the studies or populations considered for inclusion, study designs, etc.

Line 136 – Exclusion of articles due to suboptimal multivariable modeling is not a good reason. This may be a quality issue (or perhaps not - maybe they didn't control for substance use because it is collinear with the exposure, or on the causal pathway), but it is not a reason to exclude an article.

Line 150 – Did you confirm the FFQ was validated in all included articles?

Results

Overall, the results lack synthesis of evidence. If an association is observed, based on the findings what can you say about the strength of the association and in some cases direction of the association?

Lines 205 - 207 and 212-214 – Include both statistical and clinical significance

Line 255 - 256 – Specify the controls - this is essential for context. Realistically, all these results being summarized by short statements and p values should have a specific "compared to..." statement.

Lines 270 - 273 – The quality criteria checklist has been used, however only the main outcome of positive, negative, or neutral has been reported on for the individual studies. Ideally either in the main paper or as supplementary material a table should be included that reports on the results of the quality assessment and how each study scored across each of the validity questions of the tool. Key results should also be included in the text of the paper.

Discussion

Authors used strong causal language. Authors should be careful to distinguish between the results of RCTs where causal language, is acceptable and cohort studies where language that conveys that you are looking at associations is more appropriate.

The discussion also focuses too heavily on specific biological mechanisms rather than reviewing and discussing the work synthesized by this review. The discussion should explicitly compare findings of this review to those of previous ones.

Lines 424 - 436 – These implications do not connect to the findings of the review and overstep in their recommendations. The implications section should focus on specific future research studies, not policies or interventions given the heterogeneity, quality, and measurement concerns present in the included studies.

Conclusion

Lines 445 - 451 – The Conclusions section (particularly the first sentence) should be tempered to reflect the inconsistency in findings.

Tables 1 and 2 do not include enough information from each study. For Table 1: it is highly suggested to add the primary endpoint, information on the powered outcome (if there was one), the weight gain per group, the metric for adherence per group, and the total energy intake in kcals. In Table 2, similar information should be included in the context of observational studies and should importantly include weight gain and the primary outcome of those studies.

Tables 1 and 2 – Some reference numbers for studies included in the tables do not correspond to the appropriate citation in the reference list and manuscript text.