

Reviewer's report

Title: Limited agreement exists between rationale and practice in athletes' supplement use for maintenance of health: a retrospective study

Version: 4 **Date:** 25 July 2007

Reviewer: Neil Chester

Reviewer's report:

General

As the response from the authors to the initial review was unavailable it was difficult to re-review the manuscript. Please accept my apologies for repeated suggestions of revisions where the authors have already responded to in writing.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

1. It is recommended that the word 'suggest' replace the words 'lead to' in the final sentence of the abstract since it is deemed that the results do not support such a causal effect.
2. Defining the term 'convenience shopping' has helped to clarify the statement made in the introduction (paragraph 2; final sentence). However, further clarification is required with regards to the term 'complimentary ingredients' to fully elucidate this statement.
3. It is recommended that the initial sentence of the third paragraph in the methods section be reworded since it is rather long and lacks clarity.
4. The term professional and non-professional should be removed since the groups used do not fall mutually exclusively into these categories (i.e. lottery funded athletes are not necessarily non-professional). These terms can be rather misleading when referring to elite sports. It is suggested that the terms used by the UK Sport survey (i.e. players and athletes) be defined and used throughout. Such alternative terms do not carry with them connotations with regards to the level of performance.
5. The results and discussion should be separate sections and the headings should highlight this.
6. The sub-headings used in the results section should be combined to

incorporate all sample and sub-sample characteristics i.e. 'sample characteristics'. Alternatively the initial sub-heading should be termed 'sample characteristics' and the following sub-heading should be changed to incorporate characteristics of the sub-group, only (e.g. 'User sub-sample characteristics' or 'Supplement users characteristics').

7. Further clarity would be useful to explain the regulation of supplement use in the UK. The fifth sentence in the final paragraph of the discussion section is rather long and the term 'positive lists' requires further explanation.

8. It is suggested that the discussion and recommendations with regards to education and further research in the conclusions section be incorporated into the discussion section. The conclusions would therefore become a summary highlighting the main points of the study.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.