Reviewer’s report

Title: Too healthy to sell? A qualitative study of food vendors near secondary schools in disadvantaged Scottish neighbourhoods.

Version: 3 Date: 12 May 2014

Reviewer: Claire Palermo

Reviewer’s report:

Major compulsory revisions.
Thankyou for the opportunity to review this manuscript that describes a unique, yet important qualitative investigation of the perspectives of food retailers. The manuscript would benefit from revision.

The introduction covers key literature on the topic but the case of the qualitative investigation is not made clear. Being more specific about the role of food retailers in childhood obesity and why their attitudes need to be explored needs a stronger case. Why qualitative? The key need for the research is lost in lots of background on childhood obesity when really the focus should be on food retailers and the role they play in obesity. The aims of the study are not in line with what is described later in the methods. The aim was to explore a range of attitudes of retailer’s not just challenges? The secondary objective may not be feasible given the qualitative nature of the study.

Deprived is a strong term that either needs better defining or perhaps could be written more inclusively. How was take-away food shops defined? What was a ‘chain’ restaurant? The sampling needs further clarification. The interviews seemed relatively short to gauge in-depth ideals and perspectives. I do not doubt that researchers achieved data saturation (theoretical) but I wonder if data saturation was achieved due to the lack of depth of interview. This perhaps should be considered in limitations. Table 1 is a useful guide to the focus of the interview; however the rationale behind the question logic is absent. This needs to be added to the table or text to show readers logic and thinking and theory behind inquiry. Data analysis is clearly written and demonstrates triangulation. The final sentence page 7 lines 22-23 is unnecessary – this is usually this outcome of rigorous data analysis.

The results section requires further exploration of the data. There is a heavy reliance on quotes. The researchers need to provide deep description of what the data told rather than including large amounts of quotes and leave the analysis up to the reader. See Daly paper from ANZJPH ‘Qualitative method and the curse the illustrative quotation’ - http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1753-6405.2009.00419.x/pdf. The themes appear credible, but describe more clearly what the participants in the study described around each theme.

The discussion includes some important key literature but lacks a rigourous
analysis of the data presented in the manuscript. The discussion could be more effectively structured with introductory sentences reminding the reader of the aim of the study and the key findings. Discuss the key issues that the study found and focus on these as the key messages. The policy implications may be overstated given the study design and limitations. The conclusion (page 21 line 19-22) seems a big leap from the findings presented in this study.

In light of the recommended revisions to introduction, methods and results, the abstract should also be reviewed. Authors should be careful not to overstate findings.

Minor essential revisions
References. Websites need accessed dates

**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.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare I have no competing interests