

Name of journal: World Journal of Gastroenterology

Manuscript NO: 55021

Title: Food groups, diet quality and colorectal cancer risk in the Basque Country

Cover letter with point-by-point responses to each of the reviewers' comments and a description of the changes made to the manuscript.

Reviewer(s)' Comments to Author:

Reviewer's code: 03001816

SPECIFIC COMMENTS TO AUTHORS:

This is an excellent paper on an important subject. The methodology seems sound and the interpretations in the Discussion are reasonable. The revision required is to clean up the writing. There are some grammar problems here, including several incomplete sentences. A native-English speaker edit the manuscript for correct English language, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and overall style. Please, find enclosed the English editing certificate.

We highlighted the changes made to the manuscript in green.

In addition, the "results" section of the Abstract is written in such a way as to read that "fatty fish" is a form of "fiber-containing food" so you want to rewrite that so that only grains are in the fiber category and the fish is separate.

To solve this mistake we added a comma in the sentence in order for it to make sense:

Abstract, Results section, page 4: "While the consumption of fiber-containing foods, especially whole grains (OR third tertile *vs* first tertile=0.62, 95% CI 0.39-0.98) and fatty fish (OR=0.53, 95% CI 0.27-0.99) was associated with a lower risk for CRC."

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Reviewer's code: 00742054

SPECIFIC COMMENTS TO AUTHORS

Thank you for conducting this fascinating research study! This is a well-designed research and a well-written manuscript. However, there are some minor issues that need to be addressed to enhance the quality of the manuscript as follows.

- Introduction, last paragraph: "...in which both CRC incidence and have increased in recent years". It looks like something is missing here "both CRC incidence and....(?)". Please amend.

Introduction, page 7: "To our knowledge, this is the first study in the Basque country population, in which both CRC incidence and mortality have increased in recent years^[11]."

- Introduction, last paragraph: please move this section to the Methods: "The main advantage of the present study compared to these other researches is that we confirmed that controls were free of the disease through colonoscopy. Colonoscopy was used as diagnosis criteria to identify the cases in order to avoid false positives and negatives."

We moved this section to the **Methods, Study subjects**, page 8: "The main advantage of the present study compared to other above-mentioned researches^[12-14] is that we confirmed that controls were free of the disease through colonoscopy. Colonoscopy was used as diagnostic criteria to identify the cases in order to avoid false positives and negatives."

- MATERIALS AND METHODS, Study subjects: "To be eligible for this CRCSP, the patients had to be aged between 50 and 69, asymptomatic for colorectal symptoms and registered with the Osakidetza/Basque Health Service". Do these criteria apply to both case and control group or only case group? Please clarify. Also, one of the criteria is

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“asymptomatic for colorectal symptoms”; does this apply to case or control group? I think the authors need to separately address the eligibility criteria for each group.

Materials and Methods, Study subjects, page 7: “To be eligible for this CRCSP, the patients had to be aged between 50 and 69, asymptomatic for colorectal symptoms and registered with the Osakidetza/Basque Health Service^[11]. These inclusion criteria were applied to both case and control group, that is, controls fulfilled the same eligibility criteria defined for the cases, with the exception of the disease (outcome).”

- MATERIALS AND METHODS, Study subjects: “...308 subjects (66.2% men) consented to participate in the survey” The readers need to know exactly how many men and women were recruited in each group, not only the percentage of the recruited men in case group. Please add this information to Table 2.

We added this information to **Table 2**.

- MATERIALS AND METHODS, Study subjects: “In addition, for each case, three age- (± 9.0 years) and sex-matched control patients were randomly sought from the list of CRC-free subjects ($n=1,836$) who participated in the CRCSP during the same period as the cases.” The way this sentence has been written implies that for each participant in the case groups 3 participants were recruited in the control group, while there were equal number of participants in both groups. Please reword to avoid confusion.

Materials and Methods, Study subjects, pages 7-8: “In addition, for each case, three age- (± 9.0 years) and sex-matched control patients were randomly sought from the list of CRC-free subjects ($n=1,836$) who participated in the CRCSP during the same period as the cases. The matched controls were patients with positive results (abnormal) for immunochemical fecal occult blood test (iFOBT) and negative colonoscopy results (normal). The participation rate of the controls was 37.6%, and 17 subjects were excluded due to missing information. Finally, the matched case-to-control ratio was 1:1, and the final data set included 308 cases who were diagnosed with CRC and 308 age- and sex-matched controls.”

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- MATERIALS AND METHODS, Statistical analysis: what does “min/d” refer to? Please write in full words for the first time and then use acronyms afterward.

Materials and Methods, *Statistical analysis*, page 11: “We used the cut-off of Romaguera et al. (2012)^[39] to create two PE levels expressed in minutes/day (min/d) of cycling/sports: sedentary-light (<15 min/d) and moderate-vigorous (≥15 min/d).”

- Table 3: what does “g/d” refer to? Please write in full words in the table’s footnote.

Table 3, footnote, page 33: “g/d: grams/day”.

- Tables 4 and 5, please replace “p-trend” with ‘p’

We made the suggested change.