

Editor's comments:

I have now gone through the documents on the above-named manuscript and my comments are as follows:

A. Peer Review Reports :

EJNFS 42904_ SHE with a good understanding of the subject matter and with the objective comments, I am very happy about the expertise/competencies of this reviewer.

B Feedbacks

Much needs to be done in line with the comments of Reviewer EJNFS 42904_SHE.

C Revised Manuscript.

I have read both the raw and revised manuscripts and I will base the following comments on the revised manuscript:

1. **Lines 55-58** are **VERY IMPORTANT** aspects of the research work and therefore NEEDS CLARIFICATION-see Table 4 line 104. The types, nutrient compositions of the food matrices in terms of concentrations of macro-and micro-nutrients, consumption patterns and any issues of medication-SHOULD BE ADDRESSED.

2. **Lines 66, 67:** Information is needed on the type of transport medium used and how long it took for the samples to get to the laboratory and what type of storage conditions prior to commencement of microbiological examination of samples .

Lines 71,72 up to where we have Ref 19-SHOULD BE DELETED-these are widely known microbiological procedures.

Line 75: Authors mentioned very useful identification procedures in the materials and methods section for example DNA amplification etc -UNFORTUNATELY there were NO GEL PICTURES to confirm that these procedures were ACTUALLY carried out.

Line 76: Reference (s) are NEEDED for MALDI-TOF and ID 32C systems.

Overall Comments.

The authors of this important research work probably had in mind reproducible experimental methodology compatible with cohort studies BUT THEY DID NOT CONFIRM THIS IN THEIR RESULTS SECTION.

In Table 1 the authors 'identified' **inter alia**: Gram negative rods, Gram positive cocci etc. One was expecting that these bacteria and yeasts (*Candida* ?) should have been identified to species levels!

I will advise that the authors go through my comments carefully and re-submit the manuscript

Author's feedback:

Dear Editor

Thank you for your comments. We have followed your recommendations as corrected in the paper.

1) We have added the information on macronutrient intake in Tab. 1 to demonstrate the overall intake in this cohort. The information about the energy distribution by macronutrient is listed in Tab. 2 as in the previous manuscript. The medication intake for the participants was not known and we have added this point to the limitations of the study in the discussion part (line 205). Micronutrient analysis was not part of this study.

2) Information on transport medium as well as transportation conditions were added in the manuscript (line 81-83).

3) Lines 71 and 72 were deleted.

4) The methodology of the DNA analysis was not the focus of this paper and therefore no further details about the methodology were available. These tests mentioned in this manuscript are all routine laboratory tests used in daily clinical practice.

5) References for MALDI-TOF and ID 32C were improved.