Reviewer's report

Title: Validity of information on atopic disease and other illness in young children reported by parents in a prospective birth cohort study

Version: 1 Date: 10 June 2012

Reviewer: Johannes C van der Wouden

Reviewer's report:

This is a well written paper, reporting on a relevant research question and sound data.

I have some suggestions for further strengthening the paper. All of these can be considered essential, but not major.

1. It is rather peculiar, that at the end of the Discussion paragraph, additional methods are addressed. These seem to be out of order. Additionally, in the Discussion paragraph several statements are made, that should be moved to Methods (e.g. the Danish GP system).

2. Ethical issues (paragraph ‘external standard’ in Methods section).
   It is not clear whether parents had provided informed consent to the procedure of the investigators asking the children’s general practitioner for a copy of their record.

3. Timing (paragraph ‘external standard’ in Methods section).
   ‘If the same event was registered in both files (GP record and COPSAC database) within four weeks, it was considered the same disorder’. This statement should be clarified, as COPSAC collected data only every six months.

4. Statistical analysis (paragraph and table 2).
   Not clear whether overal p-values in table 2 took ordinal nature of several variables into account (household income, mother’s education). To my knowledge GEE does not do this, but it would be preferable (like a chi-squared for trend).

5. Completeness of GP records
   First paragraph of Results section, line 78: 67 records turned out to be incomplete. How could they be sure that other records were complete?

6. Limitation
   The above mentioned 67 incomplete records (67/327 = 20%) were left out of the analysis. Consequently, results are based on complete cases. This may have resulted in an overoptimistic estimate of the primary outcome.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
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 that I have no competing interests.