Reviewer's report

Title: Forecasts of COPD mortality in Australia: 2006-2025

Version: 4 Date: 22 September 2011

Reviewer: Annunziata Faustini

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Forecast of COPD mortality in Australia: 2006-2025 - 2
BMC 8th Sept 2011 due on 22 September 2011

I took note of the changes in methods section, but I did not find in the paper the results of the sensitivity analysis excluding data before 1960, nor any discussion about the possible alternative choices.

I did not judge satisfactory the authors’ answers to the major comments I did. Really, they could have been justified on the basis of different points of view in another journal; but my comments had been inspired mostly by the journal, which is focused on medical research methodology.

I understand the points the authors advanced to explain the difficulties in estimating health indicators useful to program health interventions; however predicting mortality allows the authors to draw conclusions pertinent to the reliability and the accuracy of prediction but excludes contributions to public health programmes. But, the authors maintained the conclusions focused on the public health intervention, whereas they are not supported by the results.

The authors admitted explicitly they did not agree to focus the discussion on the modelling performance in predicting mortality and maintained that this was not the aim of their paper. However the study aimed were defined as “to model changes in COPD mortality and to predict age related changes for men and women”.

About the third major comment, I meant and confirm now, that the risk of smoking in reducing the lung function is so well recognised that the guide lines universally suggest the cessation of smoking as the most powerful preventive intervention. Thus, the paper could have contributed to what is already known, detecting the most efficacious age to focus the intervention.

As for the second point, I did not understand the authors’ answer about the treatment, since any efficacious treatment improves the survival of patients. On the other hand, I have to conclude that the sentence the authors wrote (about the possibility that new treatments may reduce mortality) is only a speculative general comment. This style of discussion, is not the best for the journal to which the paper has been submitted, though it were not wrong.
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests