Reviewer's report

Title: Is occupation a better estimator of income than self-reported income? Validation of a synthetic weekly wage measure estimated from occupational descriptions for medical research.

Version: 1 Date: 31 January 2014

Reviewer: Frederic Selck

Reviewer's report:

This is a lucid and well-structured analysis of using occupational code data when self-reported income is either missing or subject to measurement error (as is often the case). It is an important, methodologically sound paper and highlights the utility of the often neglected occupational code variables available in most national health surveys.

Minor essential revisions:

1. The terms wage and income are used interchangeably throughout the text, but they can have two very different meanings. Wages mean earnings from work performed, while income generally includes both wages and other sources (such as a pension). For the most part, I would replace "income" with either "wage" or "salary" throughout the paper except when self-reported income is used.

2. It should be made clearer throughout the manuscript that this strategy only applies to survey responses from current workers and their households. One would not be able to apply this strategy to survey respondents that are often the focus of medical researchers (i.e. disabled adults living alone, elderly retired, and the unemployed). While it may seem obvious to the authors that SOC data would only be available for the subset of respondents with a current occupation, it will not be immediately apparent to others. Nor is the text very clear on this until well into the manuscript. I would strongly suggest adding the qualifier "among workers" or "among households with a wage-earner" throughout the text.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests