Reviewer's report

**Title:** Measuring the burden of herpes zoster and post herpetic neuralgia within primary care in rural Crete, Greece

**Version:** 1 **Date:** 23 September 2011

**Reviewer:** Wim Opstelten

**Reviewer's report:**

1. The authors do not give the definition they used for postherpetic neuralgia (any pain one month after rash onset, as mentioned in the Background?), nor for the acute phase of herpes zoster (the first month after rash onset?). In the literature the definition of PHN is not uniform (e.g. Oxman et al. (reference 29) define PHN as pain persisting 3 months after rash onset with a severity of 30 or higher on a 0-100 scale).

2. Combining cases of HZ and cases of PHN may overestimate the incidence of HZ.

3. The reported incidence of HZ is rather low. This may be caused by a deficient monitoring system, or selection, or a combination of both. Could the authors discuss this aspect more thoroughly?

4. As far as selection is concerned: are the healthcare facilities in Crete freely accessible for all inhabitants? If not, could this cause selection?

5. The mean duration between the development of pain and the HZ attributed rash was 5.2 + or - 5.8 days. This implies that in some patients, the pain started after the onset of the rash. For clarity, the authors should mention this in the text.

6. This is a cross-sectional study. Therefore, any causal relation between increased anxiety or depression and the occurrence of PHN cannot be assessed (or even suggested, as the authors do). Moreover, there are also some prospective studies which did not find this relation (e.g. Opstelten et al. Pain 2007).

7. I advice the authors to include the following references:


**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

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

**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