Reviewer's report

Title: The effect of educational level on bone mineral density in postmenopausal women

Version: 1 Date: 19 April 2004

Reviewer: Linda Cox Curry

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed new and well defined?
   Yes, it is relevant and interesting. I am not sure if educational level as defined can be modified much by the time a woman reaches midlife. Illiteracy differs conceptually from educational level. I suggest changing the identifier for the group from illiterate to no education.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
   Needs improvement. Procedures and statistical analyses are described well and appropriate. Sampling needs to be explained early and in more detail. Only in the conclusion is nonrandom sampling noted as a limitation to generalizability. It sounds as if there was an effort to stratify the group according to educational level, but this is not explicitly stated. Was this simply a convenience sample?

3. Are the data sound and well controlled?
   Yes. The data were derived using conventional measures of BMD and simple self-report. Authors discuss data sources sufficiently. This is not a RCT so control is comparable to other biobehavioral research. Reliability of self-report data is considered in relation to similar studies.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to standards?
   Yes. Means and SDs are reported for all relevant variables. P values are reported. In addition to stating probabilities, might emphasize the degree of difference more clearly. What were expected effect sizes? Were these demonstrated by the data?

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced?
   Yes. Some of the tangential findings about mediating variables, such as reproductive history, alcohol consumption, and cigarette smoking were particularly interesting.

6. Title and abstract?
   Yes. Title is clear but findings are broader. Abstract should focus on the most salient findings.

7. Writing?
   Needs grammatical improvement. Shorten sentences. Check for agreement errors. Purge superfluous words. Rearrange some text for readability and logical flow. What is meant by "four sites"? What is OP..used in third paragraph first page..do not see defined earlier? Table one: should this read "screened for osteoporosis instead of "with osteoporosis"?

Level for above recommendations.
Manuscript really needs very few content changes. Ones recommended are essential for clarity. Consider editing a compulsory revision.
Should it be published? Yes with revisions

Thank you for the opportunity to read this manuscript. I found it interesting, especially since it is from a different population group than groups with whom I have worked.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions