Reviewer's report

Title: Epidemiology of constipation in Europe and Oceania

Version: 1 Date: 24 September 2007

Reviewer: Vicente Garrigues

Reviewer's report:

General

The purpose of the study is of interest and, to my knowledge, has not been previously evaluated. However, a number of important methodological aspects seems not to be adequate. Furthermore, the content of the manuscript, mainly Results and Discussion Sections should be rewritten and changed in depth.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. Authors searched only in PubMed databases. This could be insufficient as many journals, especially from Europe, are not included in PubMed. Authors should have also searched in Embase and Current Contents, and perhaps also in ISI Proceedings in order to find information communicated to International Congresses. Furthermore, restricting publication languages to English and French may be too restrictive for an European review. Finally, the searching process should also include the reference lists of electronically retrieved papers.

2. Second paragraph in Methods Section should be deleted or completely rewritten.

3. Items considered for agreement between authors when reviewing relevant articles should be declared.

4. Relevant articles quality should have been evaluated, and perhaps some of them not included in the study. Otherwise, the reasons for not performing this quality analysis should be declared.

5. Many comments included in Results Section should be moved to Discussion Section.

6. It is compulsory that studies be grouped according to the type of population evaluated in order to estimate the prevalence of constipation.

7. Data should be presented separately for Europe and Oceania

8. Discussion is tedious to read and it appears to be a narrative review on
constipation. It should be rewritten in order to discuss findings of the review.

9. A great part of the Conclusion paragraph, both in main text and in Abstract Section can not be derived from the results of the review.

10. Constipation as a factor risk for “several types of cancer” is not considered at the present time.

11. Table is too large. It should be divided according to several criteria, i.e. geographic, age …

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

1. Several grammar errors should be corrected.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1. Most of the Introduction Section is a general review on constipation. This Section should be rewritten, focusing mainly on the epidemiology of constipation.

2. Some reference should be made to Rome III criteria for diagnosis of constipation, both in Introduction and Discussion Sections

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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