Reviewer’s report

Title: Epidemiology of constipation in Europe and Oceania

Version: 1 Date: 28 September 2007

Reviewer: Wieger P Voskuijl

Reviewer’s report:

General

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

When reviewing the manuscript it did not appear clear to me what the exact aim of this study and why it was undertaken.

For example why did you choose the combination of Europe and Oceania to assess prevalence. You do not make clear in your introduction whether you chose only reports on functional constipation. (i.e. no organic causes van be found). Could it not be concluded on before hand that the prevalence rates would vary according to the definition used? And that prevalence rates would vary according to the population researched?

The introduction should focus on your aim; to investigate the prevalence in these continents. When you explain the concept functional GI disease you should be more specific and clear. Functional disorders can not be called functional in a group with a known organic disorder like Parkinson or diabetes (discussion paragraph 5). What is the meaning of the information provided by the second and third paragraph of the introduction?

Is the aim to compare the prevalence of Europe and Oceania to the United States?

Why did you include French articles? Is it not true that articles not published in English are of lower scientific quality?

The first line of the second paragraph of the methods section is actually introduction.

DPW is an abbreviation and should be explained first. It is generally known that by using different definitions the range of prevalence rates will be very wide. Either state this or restrict to articles using one definition.

Then you state in your result (2nd paragraph). "Thus it is useful ...of constipation used." Maybe you should do so then right away.

Your discussion is too long and should focus on what your results add and compare them to other authors on this subject.

Finally, since functional constipation is functional and its etiology is unknown, you cannot call it a disease (final line of the discussion). It is a symptom complex.
Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

**What next?**: Reject because too small an advance to publish

**Level of interest**: An article of insufficient interest to warrant publication in a scientific/medical journal

**Quality of written English**: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**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