Reviewer’s report

**Title:** Increasing prevalence and high Incidence of celiac disease in elderly people: A population-based study

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 23 February 2009

**Reviewer:** Detlef Schuppan

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Vilppula et al. studied prevalence and incidence of celiac disease in the elderly by sequential serum screening for celiac disease antibodies. They found that the prevalence of celiac disease in elderly people is high but the symptoms are only minor. Furthermore, they show 5 cases that developed celiac disease within three years after being seronegative in the first screening. Since little is known about the development of celiac disease in elderly people these results are interesting.

However, the major point of critique is that the first and major part of the study was already published elsewhere (Vilppula et al; Dig Liver Dis.; 2008). Therefore the only novel aspects the authors are presenting is the 5 newly detected cases of celiac disease on follow up.

**Minor points:**

1. The study population is not well defined. The authors included all people over 55 years in their statistical analysis. It would make more sense to distinguish groups between 55 and 65 years and over 65 years, and to calculate prevalence and incidence separately for these groups.

2. The authors should state the number of biopsies that were taken per patient and the histopathological appearance (MARSH criteria) of the diagnosed patients. What does it mean when patients were only classified as celiacs based on marginally elevated autoantibodies and a Marsh I histology?

3. Thus they should present the titers of the seropositive patients together with the cut offs they used for diagnosis. Could the 5 newly detected celiacs be due to some variability within the used anti-tTG assay which though showing excellent reliability is not perfect?

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
no conflicts of interest