Reviewer's report

Title: The influences of childlessness on the psychological well-being and social network of the oldest old

Version: 1 Date: 14 May 2011

Reviewer: jacobijn gussekloo

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript explores an intesting field, namely the relation between childlessness and quality of later life. Because the cross-sectional design, only correlations could be described. The data presented and conclusions are not really new and are not giving deep insight. I am not really convinced that having children does not have influence on quality of life compared to those who are childless. Could negative and positive feelings lead to no difefrence? No information was presented about any kind troubles with children (divorces, diseases, problems with grandchildren, elderly abuse, moneyproblems) of which we know play an important role. Do the authors have information?

My most important question is what is new from these results?

Minor points and further questions:
* was there any information about cognitive function, and was a cutof used to go for questioning relatives?
* which relatives were involves in those who were childlessness?
* is there any information about the childlessness for nonparticipants?
* for me it is not clear how the authors dealt with parents who lost their children, recently or long ago. This could influence the resultas seriously!
* the tables could all be combined, so ther is space for more indepth analyses.
* there are mistakes in the tables (starting with table 1, row 1)
* are there any indepth analyses with the number of children?

* Flow chart is missing

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.
Declaration of competing interests: no