Reviewer's report

Title: Profiles of Physical, Emotional and Psychosocial Wellbeing in the Lothian Birth Cohort 1936

Version: 1 Date: 23 April 2012

Reviewer: Gill Livingston

Reviewer's report:

This paper is by a very respected group and reports on an unusual longitudinally well characterised cohort of participants. The paper reports on successful aging which it considers from the point of view of physical function, perceived quality of life and emotional wellbeing and their relationship to each other at age 70 (but not cognition). I think it is good that their model of successful ageing is not only deficit based and it is a clear strength that everyone in the study is the same age and thus this is not a factor.

Major Compulsory Revisions

I am concerned that the measure of wellbeing which was I think a low score on the HADS was not sufficient as wellbeing is clear related to a lack of psychopathology but is also more than that and an apathetic person in the cohort would score very highly.

This should be acknowledged in the discussion as a major limitation.

Minor Essential Revisions

In addition while the high wellbeing group had the greatest number of years of formal education there was no statistical difference between groups and the text seems misleading particularly as there are multiple analyses.

Discretionary Revisions

I think the authors should leave out “freedom from disease is a priority for a successful old age”. As our group has said “Older adults commonly stress that social engagement and positive outlook towards life are more important than physical health status, but these are often not considered at all, or are not viewed as equal facets.” Depp and Jeste’s review and Bowling’s work has also suggested that freedom from disease is not the most important aspect of wellbeing or successful ageing. The authors of this paper then quote from papers pointing out that freedom from disease is not the most valuable domain.

I think that the relationship between poor quality of life and depression is bidirectional rather than unidirectional.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

No