Reviewer's report

Title: Vertebral fractures and self-perceived health in elderly women and men: The Tromso Study, a population-based cross-sectional study

Version: 2 Date: 16 February 2013

Reviewer: Stephen Thielke

Reviewer's report:

You have done a commendable job clarifying the scope and methods of the article, and modifying the discussion in light of the results.

The language seems much clearer too -- most of the problematic sections were removed. I don't know if you really even need specialized editing at this point.

There will still a few areas which could be improved to make the article easier to understand. I believe these changes would be straightforward to make.

Major Compulsory Revisions:

Page 3, very bottom: The aim of "Study possible gender differences in the reported pain and HRQL" sounds like it is to look at these questions generally (not specifically in fractures -- the sentence before the numbers says "in a general population"). You should rewrite this to clarify that this second aim specifically involves vertebral fractures (maybe, "To see if the association between reported pain and HRQL differs between men and women.")

Top of page 5, "Ascertainment of vertebral fracture": This is a key variable, and it is ultimately coded as yes or no. It is thus important to define exactly how these were measured. Did the software make the decision? Or the technician? Or a radiologist? The details about this final determination are missing.

Bottom of page 5, about Bone mineral density: You should explain why BMD may be important in your analyses. Is it a potential confounder? I assume that you consider it a possible cause of fractures, but I'm not sure how this is directly relevant how fractures influence other outcomes. A sentence or two justifying its inclusion would thus help.

Middle of page 6: "Neck pain and back pain was recorded as "yes" or "no"." Exactly what question was used? (And it should be "were" instead of "was")

Page 8: "of lower stature" -- "shorter" is more concise.

Pages 8-9: calling the p-values of 0.55 and 0.062 no longer significant did not seem appropriate, especially if you applied a Bonferroni correction (did you in this case?) Using an absolute cutoff of p < 0.05 for significance is arbitrary, especially if you are using a lot of predictors. You might be more exact to say that the p-value increased to just above your threshold of significance.
[On that note, you probably want to say in your methods section that you used $p < 0.05$ as the standard of statistical significance]

Your discussion and conclusions were straightforward and reasonable. You produced an interesting finding that merits more attention, and there is no reason to speculate excessively about the possible causes.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**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 have no competing interests