Reviewer's report

Title: Gender differences on the association of social support and social network with self-rated health status among older adults: a population-based study

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Reviewer: Aubrey Sheiham

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This paper addresses an interesting question in a methodical manner. The data are sound. The data are clearly reported in text and tables. Limitations are clearly stated. The writing is not acceptable. There are a number of points that need to be clarified.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The English language used through much of the paper needs to be considerably improved.

2. The aim of the study needs to be more clearly stated. They say it is “The aim of this study was to investigate the association of social support and social networks with self-rated health (SRH) status in older adults, according to gender.” A clearer objective is “to test the hypothesis that there were differences between older men and women in the relationship between self-rated health (SRH) status, their social support, and social networks.”

3. Their conclusions in the abstract and main paper do not encompass the main findings and how they relate to their objective.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. They state that “Demographic characteristics are not causal factors for diseases but their role as modifying factors on the association between risk factors for health outcomes is widely accepted.” I find that statement surprising. Can they please explain what they mean?

2. The criteria for adequate food intake is very demanding and should be excluded from the analysis. Unsurprisingly, a small proportion complied with the recommendations to eat 5 portions of fruits and vegetables a day.

3. Income. As such a high proportion of the women were not employed, how was their income assessed?

4. Related to point 3 above, what proportion of the sample where husband and wives and lived in the same household?

5. Opening sentence of the abstract needs rephrasing. They say “Older adults tend to isolate themselves from family and society, which might affect their health status.” May be related to English usage. Sounds as if they want to isolate
themselves.

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

**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'