Reviewer's report

Title: Falls in advanced old age: recalled falls and prospective follow-up of over-90-year-olds in the Cambridge City over-75s Cohort study

Version: 3 Date: 6 February 2008

Reviewer: M. Clare Robertson

Reviewer's report:

The authors have again carefully responded to all the reviewers’ concerns and submitted an excellent revised paper.

In addition they have kindly provided the details of their negative binomial regression analyses. These models are recommended for the analysis of falls because they do account for the dependence of events (clustering of falls) in the same person better than most other statistical techniques commonly used.

The cluster statement in Stata is used for groups of records, for example a dataset containing one record each for individuals treated at different health centres [cluster(health centre)] or containing separate records at different time points for the same participant [cluster(id number)].

For each of the authors’ negative binomial regression models there was one record only per participant, therefore using the cluster(projectnumber) command has no meaning here. This is demonstrated by the fact that, as the authors pointed out, the resulting incidence rate ratios and confidence intervals for the robust models with and without the cluster command were identical. In my view it is entirely appropriate to use the robust statement and report the more conservative confidence intervals, therefore the model results reported in the paper do not require changing.

At the end of the Statistical methods/ Incidence of falls section, the statement adjusting for the potential clustering of falls within individuals is perhaps misleading and should be deleted since an appropriate standard model was used and no further adjusting was actually done. The authors may wish to state that they have used the robust method for calculating conservative confidence intervals for the negative binomial regression models.

What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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.