Reviewer's report

Title: Stroke awareness in the general population: knowledge of stroke risk factors and warning signs in older adults

Version: 1 Date: 19 November 2008

Reviewer: Todd S Harwell

Reviewer's report:

The authors conducted interviews with older community-dwelling residents in two jurisdictions in Ireland to assess their awareness of the warning signs and risk factors for stroke. Awareness of warning signs and risk factors for stroke was suboptimal. The manuscript is well written and adds to the existing literature on the topic.

Discretionary Revisions:

1) In the first paragraph of the background section of the manuscript the authors indicate that a person's understanding regarding the warning signs and risk factors for stroke is necessary to ensure timely medical attention. Awareness of the warning signs for stroke among both victims and bystanders is critical to ensure timely medical attention. However, it is not clear that awareness of stroke risk factors (e.g., that a person is at higher risk for a stroke) is related to accessing timely medical attention. The authors should consider rephrasing that point.

2) In the first paragraph of the methods section, the authors cite their previous work regarding the community study. It would be helpful if they could briefly summarize the methodology used so a reader does not have to review their previous study (e.g., how potential participants were identified, response rate, training of the interviewers, etc). A paragraph or two would help.

3) In the first paragraph of the results section the authors reference table 1. Are the data in table 1 weighted or unweighted? It looks like they are unweighted. That could be cited as a footnote to the table.

4) In table 2 and the second paragraph of the results section, “shortness of breath” is included as a warning sign for stroke. I do not believe that is a warning sign for stroke - but a warning sign for heart attack. The authors should remove that from the table and the analyses (2+ warning signs).

5) To simplify tables 1 and 2 for the reader - the %'s could be placed in front and the number of respondents in parenthesis “54% (1,102).” This would make tables 1 and 2 similar to tables 3 and 4. The chi-square statistics could be deleted and only the p values reported.

6) In tables 3 and 4, the authors should consider including the 95% confidence
intervals with the adjusted odds ratios. In table 3, it's not clear how social class or residential location are defined. The authors include a footnote about residential location indicating that an urban area has >1,500 people but the "area" is not defined. The authors should consider included a brief paragraph in the methods providing definitions for these terms.

7) The discussion section of the manuscript repeats much of the study results. The discussion section could be shortened to focus on the key findings, providing comparisons to other studies, the studies limitations, and the implications of the study (e.g., what can be done to improve community awareness of stroke warning signs?).

8) The authors should include a paragraph in the discussion describing the limitations of the study.


10) In the third paragraph of the background section (4th and 5th sentence) the authors use the word "nominate." That might be revised to "correctly identify."

**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.

Todd Harwell