Reviewer’s report

Title: The health status of Q-fever patients after long-term follow-up.

Version: 1 Date: 27 December 2010

Reviewer: Christian J Hoebe

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potentially very interesting manuscript with a unique large q-fever study group (patient reference study) and unique substantial longterm follow up to quantify health status.

Major compulsory revisions

1. There should be more clearly in the manuscript why the authors chose the group division in two categories of below and over 50 years of age beforehand. I doubt whether this is the appropriate design. In a patient reference study bias can be introduced by the wrong reference group.

2. The healthy control group is rather small with only 65 individuals - all over 50 years of age. The control group should be enlarged with more individuals of similar age groups as the q-fever group - thereby diminishing bias. Why chosen for the COPD group as control?

3. Why did the authors choose the NCSI for health status assessment? how many scales were evaluated for this goal?

4. The explanation of the sub-domains of the NCSI need more clarification because these remain vague: are these symptoms? how severe? abnormal health status? subjective symptoms? subjective impairment? impaired physical function? physical pain? impaired emotional role? impaired social function? What was the time-scale... did q-fever patients suffer from fatigue mainly the first year? how many improved? I miss the details of the assessment of healthstatus - while this was the main aim of the study.

5. Limitations of the study should be addressed in the discussion and also the implications for GP’s and other MD’s should be clarified more clearly.

Minor essential revisions

6. the abstract is misleading - the number of 515 used questionnaires (study population 57%) should be included in the abstract as should the numbers of the control groups. Which is in itself a fair and substantial study population.

7. the punctuation is rather sloppy and should be improved in the whole manuscript.

8. the number of decimals used in results should be synchronized - rather one decimal than two.

Discretionary revisions
9. Figure 1 can be deleted when explanation in the text is clear.

**Level of interest:** An article of outstanding merit and interest 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 declare that I have no competing interests