Reviewer’s report

Title:Cancer awareness and socio-economic position. Results from a population-based study in Denmark

Version:3 Date:16 June 2014

Reviewer:Lindsay Forbes

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for asking me to review this paper. The data are interesting and as far as I am aware, original. The study is methodologically sound and the interpretation is appropriate. The methods are well described and the study is ethnically sound.

There are some minor areas where the English could be improved and I have a couple of comments on presentation. These are all minor essential revisions.

1. The meaning of the term ‘survivability’ in the abstract was not at first glance clear to me. Suggest find a better term.

2. Background: second sentence a bit unclear – do the variations disproportionately affect people with lower SEP or in fact do they have worse cancer survival? I realise it is the latter but not very clear in this sentence.

3. Second paragraph, final sentence, not very clear. Second to last sentence, I think ‘ultimately’, would be a better adverb than ‘lastly’ – ‘ultimately’ implies importance, ‘lastly’ implies insignificance.

4. Third para – ‘only’ redundant.


Results and Discussion

7. page 8: second line a bit clumsy.

8. I suggest comment on data completeness about SEP and other demographic variables – it is a key strength of this study.

9. Tables 2,3 and 4 – I suggest improve the titles of the tables, putting the subject e.g. cancer symptom awareness, awareness of risk factors and awareness that cancer risk increases with age earlier in the title. It took me a while to work out which was which.

10. I was interested in how educational level, occupation and household income vary together – I suspect they are highly correlated, and I see that the analysis has acknowledged this by not adjusting them for each other. They are all indicators of the latent variable SEP, but of course perhaps have their own influence, especially education. However, some more comment on this in the
results and discussion sections would be useful.

11. Awareness of 5 year survival – I think ‘depicts’ is the wrong word to describe a table. More substantively, I think that Figure 2 is very interesting and deserves more comment. However I am not convinced that table 5 is illuminating – partly because those who under and over-estimated were grouped together, so where there are statistically significant results, they are difficult to interpret. Some more comment on this in the discussion would be useful.

12. I think the results of the sensitivity analyses could be minimised, or even reduced to a single sentence.

13. In the discussion, paras 2 and 3 are a bit confused. I think the authors should set out a bit more clearly the hypothesis that SEP influences awareness influences behaviour influences late stage influences survival (preferably in a less clumsy way than I have just done!), and address the extent to which this study contributes to that more systematically.

14. Minor point – laypeople, not laymen.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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.