Reviewer's report

Title: Hospital admissions in older people with visual impairment in Britain

Version: 1 Date: 12 December 2007

Reviewer: Robert Cumming

Reviewer's report:

This is a well-written paper describing a large cohort study of vision impairment and risk of hospital admission. This is easily the best study to date of this issue. The baseline response rate was high (70%) and it appears that there was very little loss to follow. The statistical analyses are appropriate, with good control for potential confounders and consideration of variables that might be on causal pathways from poor vision to hospital admission (model 3). There is good statistical power.

A. Major compulsory revisions

None.

B. Minor essential revisions

None.

C. Discretionary revisions

(1) As shown by the authors at the top of page 7, people with poor vision are more likely to be admitted to hospital for treatment of eye diseases (especially cataract surgery) than people with good vision. I think the authors should do a sensitivity analysis, repeating their analyses excluding these ophthalmology admissions. The real interest here is whether poor vision increase risk of non-eye admissions.

(2) The Discussion and Conclusion could probably be expanded a little. Do the authors think that treating vision impairment might lead to decreased hospital admissions (because improved vision leads to reduced functional disability)? Is there any RCT evidence of this? The authors could refer perhaps to the MRC trial on which this study is based.

What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.
Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.