Reviewer's report

Title: Socio-economic differences in life expectancy among persons with diabetes mellitus or myocardial infarction: results from the German MONICA/KORA study

Version: 2 Date: 3 August 2009

Reviewer: Jacques van Eijk

Reviewer's report:

This is a possible interesting contribution, but I have an important general remark relating to the research question of this study.

1. This paper suffers from unclarity about its objective. I think the authors should make a choice between a methodological article (description of a method for analysing small data sets) or an article on SES differences in Life expectancy. They should much more precisely describe their research question and in the introduction demonstrate the relevance of their study, either from the methodological point of view or the other. If they for example choose the SES differences they can much more elaborate on the causation, the direct or indirect hypothesis. Also they could more convincingly make clear why it is important to study SES differences within disease groups.

2. Furthermore they should be careful with regard to the choice of the diseases. Diabetes is known to be a risk factor for cardiovascular diseases. So there may be overlap.

3. They could make more clear what selections occurred by making the typology for SES as they did.

4. Can they clarify how they handled the different follow periods an the rather strong variability regarding age?

5. How exactly was their dependent variable measured?

6. The paper could be written more concisely.

These are my primary concerns, but first of all the authors should decide on what topic they would like to elaborate. If they choose for a more statistical article they probably could be better submitted to another journal. Elaboration on SES differences might be more interesting to readers of this journal.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.
Declaration of competing interests:

"I declare that I have no competing interests"