Reviewer’s report

Title: The impact of social status inconsistency on cardiovascular risk factors, myocardial infarction and stroke in the EPIC-Heidelberg cohort

Version: 1 Date: 11 August 2010

Reviewer: Alexander M Clark

Reviewer's report:

This large cohort study contributes new and interesting knowledge regarding the links between social status and cardiovascular risk from a cohort of patients from Sweden.

MAJOR REVISIONS

As the age cut-off for the sample was 64 years, the paper should be framed around premature CVD.

INTRODUCTION

The paper adds new knowledge regarding the complexity of the dimensions of social status and CV risk – the introduction. However, as stands it is under-theorized and lacks clarity.

This is because it uses terminology throughout that is undefined, weakly conceptualized and confusing to the vast majority of readers. The following each should be clearly defined / operationalized and their relationship to each other explained with reference to theory and empirical research:

1. Social Status
2. Status hierarchy
3. Status inconsistency
4. Over-education
5. Under-education
6. Psychosocial strain
7. Upwardly mobile
8. Low education, High education
9. Underqualified
10. Over-reward

2. The cultural transferability of these concepts should also be addressed outside of Germany or Western European countries.

DISCUSSION
While there was an association between status inconsistency and CVD, why would this come about? What theoretical reasons would there be for this to be plausible? This needs to be explained in the context of existing theory.

The discussion moves off into a very questionable tangent by stating that many of the participants were underqualified for their job – page 9 – the data or theoretical approach – just don’t substantiate such a normative and sweeping conclusion.

Perhaps this is more of a language issue – what of jobs that don’t demand any form qualifications – such as a small business owner? How the researchers calculated whether individuals were over-qualified and the theoretical basis to this should be explained.

MINOR ESSENTIAL
More detail of Heidelberg is needed to convey to international readers the country, composition and population features of the setting.

METHODS
The data are somewhat dated – ending in 2006. Event rates in both sexes in the cohort were unsurprisingly low due to the comparative young age of the sample.

FINDINGS
These are clearly presented.

**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:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
I declare that I have no competing interests'