Reviewer's report

Title: Social participation reduces depressive symptoms among older adults: An 18-year longitudinal analysis in Taiwan

Version: 1 Date: 5 January 2011

Reviewer: Daniel W O'Connor

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There is no such word as "attrited". "Dropped out" is a better term.

More information is required about the CES-D items included in the "negative affect" and "lack of positive affect" domains so that readers can replicate this distinction if they wish.

It is difficult to understand the actual period of follow-up described in this analysis. Participants were aged 60-64 years at baseline. Outcomes are described at age 70 years. The authors refer to an 18-year follow-up period (Abstract, Methods) but this presumably refers to the whole of the study, not just the part described here. The period of follow-up covered in this analysis must be stated more explicitly in the abstract and methods.

It would indeed be preferable to include changes over time in predictor variables (physical health, disability etc) in the statistical analysis. The authors state that "analysis of the additional time-varying covariates was beyond the scope of this investigation" (Page 12, para 1). It is not clear what this means. Was such an analysis beyond the scope of the authors? Can they access help to remedy this deficiency.

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