Reviewer’s report

Title: Socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity independently predict health decline among older diabetics

Version: 3 Date: 20 June 2011

Reviewer: Courtney Rees

Reviewer’s report:

Overall, I still like the approach of this paper to disentangle the health decline related to race/ethnicity from those due to SES, especially using a strong longitudinal dataset that hasn’t been used for this purpose previously. However, the author did not show results from additional analyses that I feel would better highlight the need for this study:

Major Compulsory Revisions:

• In addition, it appears in your comments to the reviewers that you have more data to report on the overall change in health status over time (as in a figure), as well as additional subgroups analyses or interactions between race and SES. In my opinion, I think that this would be a greater contribution to the literature to present all these analyses in a single paper.

• I am not fully familiar with the method used, and am still unclear about the analyses reported in the paper. If the model allowed for both random slopes and random intercepts, do you have variance terms to report?

• The proportional odds assumption is still not directly mentioned in the paper – I did not fully understand why this is not a limitation here, but if there were likelihood ratio tests conducted to examine this, it should be noted.

Minor Essential Revisions

• Table 1: There are no labels to indicate percentages vs. means in the 0 to 5 self-reported health columns. In addition, the mean values for income and assets are confusing – are the mean assets in the poor health group (0.14) equal to $14,000?

• Table 2: Also needs labels for percentages, etc. Contrary to the other reviewer, I still think this would be more useful as column rather than row percentages. For example, because there are so few Latino respondents, it makes more sense to me to see how their income is distributed, rather than how each income category is distributed among racial groups.

• Page 8 – Should the first sentence of the Covariates section also mention co-morbidities, as these are also controlled for?

• Page 12 – The interpretation of the education should clarify the reference group: Some college or more compared to those with less than high school education had a significant decrease in the cumulative odds of better health
Discretionary Revisions:

• I have a follow-up question about mortality in this study that perhaps should be addressed. People were included in this study if they participated in 3 waves of the survey, but only 71% survived over the entire time period. How was mortality captured in this method? Is there a possibility that death is a competing risk – that is, blacks are more likely to die (during the study and perhaps before the survey baseline), and this influences who is left in the sample and their rate of health decline?

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**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