Reviewer's report

**Title:** Musculoskeletal comorbidities in cardiovascular disease, diabetes and respiratory disease: the impact on activity limitations; a representative population-based study

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 8 November 2010

**Reviewer:** Elaine Harkness

**Reviewer's report:**

This paper looks at the prevalence of musculoskeletal co-morbidities in patients with other chronic disorders, and the relationship between these and activity limitations. The findings suggest that those with co-morbid arthritis and back problems tend to have higher activity limitations than those with other types of co-morbidity.

**Major revisions**

Methods

More details should be given about the two-stage cluster design of the survey to describe how the sample was representative of the household population.

More details should be given about the specific questions in relation to the musculoskeletal chronic diseases. For example, how are back problems defined?

Is the measure in relation to activity limitation a validated measure?

**Discretionary Revisions**

Results

A table of population characteristics may be of interest to readers.

Discussion

Activity limitations were taken as those that reported limitations sometimes or often – it would be interesting to know whether there were differences between these categories.

It would be useful if the authors suggested what types of intervention and prevention strategies they feel would be beneficial. This could perhaps include some discussion around the potential synergies and antagonisms in populations with co-morbid conditions and the potential problems of delivering intervention and prevention strategies. For example, exercise may be beneficial for those with cardiovascular disease but may aggravate another condition e.g. arthritis.

On page 7, one of the limitations the authors discuss is that of self-report data and that this may lead to an underestimate of the prevalence of chronic disease. However, for something like back pain self-report data may also lead to an overestimate of prevalence.
Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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 I have no competing interests