Reviewer’s report

Title: The excess mortality risk of diabetes associated with functional decline in older adults: Results from a 7-year follow-up of a nationwide cohort in Taiwan

Version: 2 Date: 7 October 2011

Reviewer: Ruth Hubbard

Reviewer’s report:

Impression

The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of diabetes on the mortality of older people in Taiwan. Using a moderately large nationally representative sample, participants were stratified according to their functional status, which was self-reported. Diabetes was not associated with increased mortality in those with high functioning, had a hazard ratio for mortality that just reached significance in those with middle functioning and had its greatest impact in those with low functioning.

The importance of considering functional status in the management of chronic disease for older people has been incompletely explored; hence studies in this field are of particular interest. The paper is well written and soundly contextualized with respect to existing literature. The discussion includes clear acknowledgement of the study’s limitations and feasible mechanistic explanations for the results. The conclusions are well balanced and adequately supported by the data.

MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISIONS

1. There is one major methodological point which needs to be addressed. In the methods section, under the subheading “Functional status groups” the authors state “Participants were divided into three groups based on functional status: (1) high functioning group, defined as reporting no limitations in ADLs, IADLs, or physical functioning; (2) low functioning group, defined as reporting limitations in one or more ADLs; (3) middle functioning group, defined as all participants in between groups 1 and 2.”

I do not understand how there can be a group between “no limitations” and “one limitation” Was this based on the degree of limitation e.g. needing assistance? Or did the low functioning group actually have limitations in TWO or more ADLs?

2. Also, please clarify whether only patients whose diabetes had been confirmed by a medical professional were included.

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

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare I have no competing interests.