Reviewer's report

Title: Prevalence of low back pain and occupational risk factors among the Chinese coal miners

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Reviewer: Chris Jensen

Reviewer's report:

It is certainly interesting to read a paper on working environment factors and LBP in Chinese coal miners.

However, there are some problems with the study that need to be addressed. First of all, the cross-sectional study design does not permit any insight of the etiology of back pain, as stated in the "Background". Thus, most of the associations reported in table 2 are trivial and expected as workers with pain are inclined to report bad working postures (I do not agree that this is because they report risk factors more accurately as stated at the end of the Discussion). I believe the study would have been more interesting if only the prevalence of LBP and the exposures at work were described without trying to describe associations. Or even better, if methods, such as observations, had been used to describe exposures. Also, it would have been more informative if LBP had been described in more detail (intensity, frequency).

The procedure on random sampling and on answering the questionnaire should be described more thoroughly. Why were workers helped to answer the questions? Why did the sample consist of many retired workers (and how many?).

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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