Reviewer’s report

Title: Impact Of Occupational Exposure On COPD

Version: 2 Date: 18 September 2011

Reviewer: Duncan Fullerton

Reviewer’s report:

General Comments:

This well written manuscript describes the results of a multi centre cross sectional study of 591 smokers in order to assess the impact occupational exposures have on COPD.

This subject matter addresses a potentially important public health problem and the work should be of interest to both clinicians and researchers. The conclusion that the researchers make from the data is that self reported exposures to vapors, dust, gases and fumes were associated with being male, older and having more asthma like symptoms and atopy, suggesting that even in smokers or ex smokers with COPD, occupational exposures are associated with distinct patient characteristics which might be the consequence of gene-environment interactions. The authors justifiably remark that their work needs to be confirmed and expanded to other cohorts and that we should try and identify which pollutants are involved.

The methodology involved respiratory physicians prospectively recruiting patients with COPD and using validated questionnaires. Occupational exposures were assessed using the ECRHS derived occupational questions and the job exposure matrix was used to analyse the individuals who reported VDGF exposures.

The discussion appropriately highlights the study’s strengths and weaknesses and draws appropriate conclusions.

Specific comments for review:

• Abstract - I wonder whether the statement regarding gene-environment interactions would maybe be better placed in the discussion rather than the abstract as I am not sure that the data supports this statement strongly enough for it to appear in the abstract.
• Background – well written and appropriately succinct.
• Methods – What does BPCO stand for??
• Results – 2nd para page 8 – gas not gaz?; figure 1 should have a label for the y axis.
• Discussion – page 11… 3rd para. “Since the late 1960s, it HAS BEEN known that....”
In summary I believe that this is well written study on an important topic that provides good evidence and justification for more work in this area.

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

**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 that I have no competing interests