Reviewer's report

Title: A simple measure with complex determinants: investigation of the correlates of self-rated health in older adults from three continents

Version: 1 Date: 11 April 2012

Reviewer: Yunhwan Lee

Reviewer's report:

This cross-national comparative study is valuable in that it examines self-rated health and its correlates between countries in the Far East and the West. The study design is well-conceived and the paper well-written. I have just few questions and comments.

Major Compulsory Revisions
- The authors start the paper by mentioning the importance of “individual, national, and cohort factors" in determining self-rated health. I think this is a very important and unique approach that the authors have taken. Although the authors report and discuss findings related to these factors, they become somewhat toned down as the discussion progresses. It is not clear what their conclusions are on this matter. It would be helpful for the readers if the authors explain these terms more specifically and summarize and discuss the findings according to these factors.

- In the older Korean sample, there appears to be quite infrequent positive SRH responding. Doesn’t this suggest “extreme tendency” in the response patterns? Can the finding of older Koreans to report poorer health be due to the tendency of older Koreans to rate their health more negatively?

Minor Essential Revisions
- The surveys appear to have used multi-stage probability sampling. Were design effects and sampling weights considered in the analysis?
- Please specify the type of multiple comparison tests that was used.

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest 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.