Reviewer's report

Title: Do positive or negative experiences of social support relate to current and future health? Results from the Doetinchem Cohort Study

Version: 1 Date: 30 September 2011

Reviewer: Yagoub Al-Kandari

Reviewer's report:

Review:

I would like to thank you for providing me with an opportunity to review the research article entitled: "Do positive or negative experiences of social support relate to current and future health? Results from the Doetinchem Cohort Study" by Simone Croezen, Susan HSJ Picavet, Annemien Haveman-Nies, Monique WMM Verschuren, Lisette CPGM de Groot and Pieter van 't Veer. I am pleased to write that the authors have produced a scientifically sound paper that is publishable. In general, the research questions posted in the paper are well defined. Authors investigated the associations of positive and negative experiences of social support with current and future lifestyle factors, biological risk factors, self-perceived health and mental health over a 10 year period. Research method was appropriate. Researchers well described the research design, measurements and scales and statistical analysis. Data sound is good and the paper adheres to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition. The discussion and conclusion sections are well balanced with the manuscript and adequately supported by the data and results. Authors well defined the problem and discussed it and concluded that social support have a beneficial effect on lifestyle and health. Limitations of the work clearly stated. Authors used appropriate published work and clearly acknowledge the works upon which they are building. The research title, abstract and writing in general are acceptable.

Although the paper is publishable in the BioMed Central Journal, some minor revisions are needed. Here are the suggestions:

1- The sample aged 26-65 years who participated in the research in the abstract (p. 3) is not written in the text.

2- The odds ratios written in the abstract are not completed by using the "95% CI". (P. 3; lines 20 & 22; and p. 4 lines 2 &3).

3- Dressler, WW.'s works concern social support and health are not reviewed in the background and in the discussion section. Dressler is one of the major scholars who did many researches in the modern world and different cultures. It is important to cite some of his work.

4- No enough information about the study society, Doetinchem.

5- No information concern age, gender and number of the sample in the design section. Authors sometime talk about percentage and not numbers. Numbers are
needed.

6- Some information and examples of the social support measurement sentences need to be mentioned.

7- Validity and reliability are needed for the social support. Authors did not explain these in the text.

8- More details are needed for the physical activity scale. The authors stated that physical activity questionnaire developed for the EPIC study. More information is needed, questions, validity, and reliability.

9- In Biological risk factors section, authors stated that "based on calculated body mass index (kg/m2) respondents were allocated to either having a normal weight (<25 kg/m2) or having overweight (>25 kg/m2)". It is known that BMI was divided into five categories as an indicator of obesity as suggested by WHO, under weight, normal weight, obesity grade 1, grade 2 and grade 3. Do the authors follow these categories? What about the persons who are in the underweight category?

10- The Mental Health Index (MHI-5) was used but no information is mentioned concern validity and reliability.

11- Many references are not new in date. More recent related publications are needed.

**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'