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: 20 October 2011

Reviewer: Azam Baheiraei

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript addresses an important area in public health. The aim of the present study is to examine the associations of positive and negative experiences of social support with lifestyle factors, biological risk factors, self-perceived health and mental health over a 10-year period. The results suggest that the social support might have a beneficial effect on lifestyle and health. The research questions are adequately defined. The methods are appropriate and the data are sound. The manuscript can adhere to the general standard for reporting and data deposition. The discussion, limitations and conclusion are well described. In general, the title and abstract are acceptable. The manuscript is well written.

Minor essential revisions:

1. In the Abstract, the authors need to include the 95% Confidence Interval (CI).

2. In a few areas, the tenses used need to be revised e.g. in the Abstract, ‘aims’ (line 2) should be changed to ‘aimed’ and “showed” (last paragraph) to “shows”.

3. The problem is not convincingly articulate in the Background section. The earlier studies on the subject should be adequately addressed.

4. The age range of the subjects mentioned in the Abstract is different from the age range stated in the Method section, which needs to be clarified.

5. The information about the validity of the Social Experiences Checklist presented in the Discussion section has to be moved to the Method section.

6. In the Method section on page 8, it is not clear why the BMI was only divided into two categories.
7. The authors need to compare their findings with other studies discussing how this study either agrees or disagrees with them in more details in the Discussion section.

8. The overall implications of the study for public health should be clearly noted for the readership of BMC Public Health. In addition, a subheading would be helpful in the Discussion section for the strength and limitations of the study.

9. In regards to referencing, more recent publications on the subject need to be 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 that I have no competing interests.