Reviewer’s report

Title: Does housework keep you healthy? The contribution of domestic physical activity to meeting current recommendations.

Version: 4 Date: 2 April 2013

Reviewer: Niamh NM Murphy

Reviewer’s report:

Discretionary Revisions

This is a well constructed, well written paper and is worthy of publication. The research question is well defined, and the arguments are made clearly and succinctly. The methods are well described and statistical analyses are presented clearly in Table format, with appropriate statistical techniques employed.

1. Perhaps the authors could highlight the innovative features of their analysis more clearly in the Abstract, and/or title of the paper. Even though the rationale for encouraging people to be active in their daily lives is a worthy one, it does lead to overestimation problems when measuring physical activity. The findings from this paper begs the question whether domestic activity, which people report as MVPA, is, in fact, activity of moderate to vigorous intensity. This is nicely described in the second paragraph of the Introduction and is worthy of a mention in the Abstract.

2. This type of activity is negatively associated with leanness and the last sentence of the Abstract states that it therefore ‘may not be sufficient to enhance health’. One could expand the notion of ‘health enhancing’ beyond leanness, however. Indeed, the authors make this point well at the end of the first paragraph in the Introduction in respect of cardiovascular health. Perhaps domestic activity replaces sedentary time and is health-enhancing in this respect. Conversely, domestic activity is often considered a ‘menial task’ and may contribute adversely to mental being! Some of these arguments might enliven the paper!

3. In the Results section it is stated that “For women, if domestic physical activity was excluded from their total MVPA, only 20.4% would be deemed to meet current recommendations.”. This is a useful headline finding also, and probably worthy of inclusion in the Abstract. The recommendations for physical activity promotional campaigns in the Discussion are well made.

Minor essential revisions

4. Abstract

Methods: Data were collected...

Abbreviation for ‘moderate to vigorous domestic physical activity’, i.e. MVPA, after first use of term
Last sentence “MVPA particularly among females and older adults however such activity is negatively associated with”-full stop before ‘however’.

5. Methods
Outcome Measures-Domestic physical activity, last sentence, classified as low intensity physical activity. In previous sentence, comma after ‘For each activity’.

6. Results
“Of the 1989 respondents who meet the current guidelines, 1321 (66.4%) report at least 10 minutes…”

“Females and older individuals reported higher levels of MVPA than their male and younger counterparts (both P<0.001).”. Is this correct for total MVPA?? Seems counter intuitive. Or does it refer to the percentage contribution of domestic physical activity to MVPA? It might be useful to indicate the percentage of young men meeting guidelines, compared to young women.

7. Discussion, last paragraph
“dietary intakewere objectively measured…”-spacing

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