Reviewer's report

Title: Nutritional and health status among nursing home residents in Lebanon: comparison across gender in a national cross sectional survey.

Version: Date: 24 February 2014

Reviewer: Raildo S Coqueiro

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Overview
This is a cross-sectional survey aimed to assess and examine the gender specific characteristics (demographic, socio-economic, functional, psychological, and nutritional status) of elderly residing in Lebanese long-term care nursing homes. This was the first extensive national study conducted in Lebanon for this purpose. The problem of the study is well grounded and a gap in knowledge is clearly established. The methods are suited to the purpose of the research and the data are quite consistent. The discussion and conclusions are well balanced and adequately supported by the data. The limitations of the work are clearly stated. The title and abstract accurately convey what has been found. The writing is acceptable.

Minor essential revisions:

Methods (Interview and medical dossier):
- p. 7 - “Individuals describing their health as very poor are screened out and not included in this study.” … This should be included in the exclusion criteria.

Methods (Anthropometric measurements):
- Provide the fabricants and countries of the used equipments (electronic digital scale and stadiometer).
- The measure of the stature needs to be better described. How were the participants positioned (feet, calves, buttocks, back)? Was the head positioned in the Frankfurt plane?
- The results (Table 2) for BMI classification are presented, but this classification has not been described in the methods. Please indicate the reference cutoff points used for BMI.

Results (Nutritional status and health characteristics)
- Please, review Figure 1. It seems incorrect. Apparently it expresses the general distribution of the comorbidities (yes or no) and not the distribution according to gender, as the description indicates.

Results (Functional ability, psychological status and social contact):
- p. 10: “Males report a higher level of functional ability in comparison to women
for all the ADL components except continence.”… Considering that statistics only indicated difference for bathing and dressing, it is not possible to affirm this.

Discretionary revisions:

Discussion (Limitations):
- I do not agree with the third limitation (cross-sectional design) pointed by the authors. I believe that this limitation does not apply to the study. First, because the study is descriptive and cross-sectional design serves this purpose very well. Secondly, because the only independent variable considered in hypothesis testing was gender. As gender is a non-modifiable factor, there is no possibility of reverse causality.
- In the same way the authors recognized the limitations of the study, I suggest they should point its strong points.

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.