Reviewer’s report

Title: The psychometric properties of the AUDIT. A survey of a random sample of an elderly Swedish population.

Version: 2 Date: 10 February 2014

Reviewer: Linda Ng Fat

Reviewer’s report:

This paper aims to investigate the important question as to whether the AUDIT is valid for elderly populations. The sample of 79 to 80 year olds benefited from a good response rate, and differences were found between the two samples, however the paper could benefit from greater clarification.

Major Compulsory Revisions:

1. In the method section no justification has been given as to why they have defined the elderly population as those aged 79-80. What about people aged between 72-79, or over 80? Including slightly younger or slightly older people may have produced different results so the findings may not be representative of an ‘elderly population’ but just this cohort. Since the age group is so narrowly defined the title ‘A survey of a random sample of an elderly Swedish population’ may be misleading. It could be made clear in the title the sample is just 79 to 80 year olds, and be addressed as a limitation.

2. There needs to be more justification as to why the comparison has been made with 17 to 71 year olds. At the beginning of the literature review elderly is defined as above 65 years in the first paragraph, yet here people aged 65 to 71 are grouped together with the total population and labelled ‘younger people’. Was there any previous analysis done on the subgroups within the 17 to 71 year old population, to show that findings among 65 to 71 years olds are same / different to 17 to 64 year olds? If so the paper can be strengthened by mentioning this in detail.

3. In the Statistics section you have listed the tests you will be carrying out but no indication as to how they will answer the aims of your study. More detail needs to be provided as to what the statistical technique is being used for. For example what question is the 2 (gender) x 3 (postages) ANOVA technique addressing? Some of your readers may not be familiar with the techniques that you are mentioning here.

4. In the ‘Participants’ section the sample size of 17-71 year olds could be provided (and not only later in the results section). Since the main conclusions are based upon a comparison between these two surveys, a sentence as to how results was collected and the response rate of the study in 2009 will be useful to
the reader. Was the mode of data collection the same between the two samples?

5. The limitations of the paper could be discussed in greater detail. For example as mentioned earlier the use of only 79 to 80 year olds. Also the assumption that non-responders are similar to late responders - what about the people among the elderly who are too ill/frail to send back a postal questionnaire?

Minor Essential Revisions
1. There is a typo in the title ‘Introduction’

2. What sample does Table 3 refer too? 17-71 year olds, or 79-80 year olds? This need to be stated in the title

3. It would be useful to describe what audit-c is, and how many items on AUDIT this involves when it is first mentioned in the introduction, since some of your analysis is based upon assessing this measure.

4. Table 1, 2 and 3 could benefit from including sample sizes in the title

Minor discretionary reviews
1. The discussion could consider that a smaller set of questions (and not just a lower cut-off point) such as the AUDIT-5 may be a more valid measure among elderly populations as mentioned in the introduction.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests