Reviewer's report

Title: Allergic conditions and risk of hematological malignancies in adults: a cohort study

Version: 2 Date: 3 October 2004

Reviewer: Jacqueline Clavel

Reviewer's report:

General
The paper is very interesting and suitable for publication. The corrections made improved the manuscript. However, some aspects remain unclear and still need minor revisions (see below).

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
None

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
Comment 2- Time variations
I agree that calendar time can be regarded as potential effect modifier rather than confounding factor and that a stratified analysis would have been appropriate. If the power of the study was not sufficient for this, it is a weakness of the study which should be discussed briefly in the ‘discussion’ section. At least, a description of the association in 2 or 3 successive periods should be useful, if possible.

Comment 3-c The question of whether or not the study base is representative of the general population is relevant. I assumed the authors would have analyzed the general mortality of the cohort before specific analyses. If a general comparison of causes of death between this cohort and the general Swedish population is available, it is useful to include it. If not, this should be briefly indicated in the ‘discussion’ section as a missing information.

Comment 4- Confounding
The present wording in the ‘confounders and effect modifiers’ subsection suggests that alcohol, level of education and smoking are risk factors of hematological malignancies or are associated to hematological malignancies in the present cohort. Therefore, “potential confounders” should be replaced by “factors” in this subsection.

Comment 5 c- The question of whether allergy is related to other causes of death in the cohort is relevant to appreciate the specificity of the results. If the authors cannot provide us with these results, they should mention it in the ‘discussion section’.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No