Reviewer's report

Title: Validity of self-reported male balding patterns

Version: 1 Date: 6 October 2004

Reviewer: Andrew G Messenger

Reviewer's report:

General
A number of studies, some very large, have used self-reported balding status as a primary variable without any substantial verification of its accuracy. This study is therefore a useful contribution. It would be interesting to re-evaluate the conclusions of previous studies (e.g. those exploring the association between balding and coronary artery disease), factoring in the degree of uncertainty revealed by this study.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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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)

1. Discussion of the progression of balding in the Background section needs minor modification. The patterns of male balding are quite variable and do not necessarily evolve in the way implied by Norwood-Hamilton grading. Vertex balding may develop independently of frontal recession and total balding (N-H VI/VII) is most commonly the result of a joining up of frontal recession and vertex balding, rather than a progression of frontal recession. Occasionally male balding follows a ‘female’ pattern in which there is a diffuse reduction in hair density over the crown and frontal scalp. This is relatively uncommon in Caucasian males, and unlikely to have influenced the results, but is common in Asians.

2. 'Australian' ethnicity needs some explanation. I presume these were Caucasian men (and most probably of British/Irish extraction), rather than aboriginals - this should be clarified. As an incidental, there have been no studies on hair status in Australian aborigines - a topic for a future study?

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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 whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

None