Reviewer’s report

Title: The contribution of leading diseases and risk factors to excess losses of healthy life in eastern Europe: burden of disease study

Version: 1 Date: 14 July 2005

Reviewer: Martin Bobak

Reviewer’s report:

General

This is an interesting and useful numerical exercise, building on the GBD project and providing a more detail breakdown than the previous GBD publications. Not surprisingly, the overall thrust of the paper is similar to that published previously by the GBD project.

As with other broad brush instruments, the precision / reliability of the indirect estimates presented in this paper are not ideal, especially when it comes to the risk factors. It is easy to produce aetiological (or impact) fractions that are too high. [I use and cite these figures myself but I find them not entirely credible.] There should be more caution in the discussion of the attribution of deaths and DALYs to different risk factors.

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

I do not have any problem with the paper, and I do not suggest any compulsory revision.

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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)

None

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

One minor comment relates to use of the term “interaction” (e.g. pages 7 and 9). I agree that the impact of different risk factors depends on the background risk but I think that the right term for what the authors actually meant is “combination” (probably including risk factors not covered by the exercise). As far as I am aware, an interaction (as most epidemiologists see it, i.e. that the combined effect is larger than the multiplication of individual effects) has not been consistently demonstrated for conventional risk factors and CVD. Perhaps this could amended in the manuscript.

What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests