Reviewer's report

Title: What about teachers' health? Results from a French survey

Version: 1 Date: 12 December 2005

Reviewer: Fumio Kobayashi

Reviewer's report:

General
The authors attempted to determine whether there was a connection between being a teacher and having mental and physical health problems by comparing the prevalence of a variety of mental health disorders and several physical illnesses in a group of teachers to a control group. As reports on health conditions in schoolteachers have been quite limited so far, this paper provides very interesting and valuable findings. There are, however, several problems as described below.

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

Results
Although the authors detected a significant interaction between age and occupation (page 12, line 2 from the bottom), virtually no details were presented. When the interaction is meaningful, the author should also comment on it in the Discussion.

Discussion
A too conclusive expression like the third phrase on the page 15 should be avoided because of several essential limitations in this cross-sectional postal questionnaire study. In addition, the authors should mention the validity and limitation of selecting the control group from the same population of MGEN policyholders as the teachers.

What is your possible explanation for the higher prevalence in Eczema/dermatitis in teachers? (page 15, line 2)

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Results
In Table 2, the mean age with ranges of samples by occupational groups should be written instead of the age distribution.
In Table 3 and Table 6, age adjustment is needed to compare the lifetime prevalence between the two groups, because it might be strongly influenced by the age of subjects, which is significantly different between the two groups.
Table 4 should be presented by gender.
The authors should clearly describe which items were adjusted in the multivariate analysis for obtaining the odds ratio of occupational group in Table 4.
Instead of distribution of BMI in Table 5, the age-adjusted mean BMI values should be presented.
The description of the first line of the page 14 about the prevalence of Arthrosis in female teachers is contradictory to the corresponding values in Table 6.
Study sample
The overall response rate of 66.5% is acceptable but not very high. It is probable that the non-respondents do have some mental health problems. Is it possible to confirm the response rate of teachers at the same level as the control group?
Working conditions and occupational factors of teachers might vary greatly according to the type of school, for instance, elementary school or secondary school. These information should be added for a detailed description of teachers.

**What next?:** Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**Statistical review:** Yes

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