Reviewer's report

Title: Overweight, physical activity, tobacco and alcohol consumption in a cross-sectional random sample of German adults

Version: 1 Date: 20 March 2006

Reviewer: Dag Thelle

Reviewer's report:

General
The paper brings forward important information for the local health authorities and tells us that the German population to a large extent behaves similar to the rest of the industrialised world

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
There is no reference to the standardised questionnaire used, except that it includes instruments developed for the MONICA study. The standardised questionnaire should either be described in more detail, or if generally available (website?), referred to specifically. Issues such as physical activity (as the authors correctly state) are difficult to compare between populations due to different methods. Still, one would like to know what the term standardisation implies, and whether the nutrition, alcohol and physical activity items are directly comparable to for instance MONICA data.

There are a few convoluted sentences under Discussion (p17) such as the one starting with "In our collective subjects in the 41-65 year age group..." there seems to be a word or two missing. The sentence should be rephrased. Also the term "collective" sounds outlandish, almost like something from the 1960-70s.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
Table headings: avoid the word Collective. An alternative heading in table 1 could be: The gender and age distribution 2445 German adults aged 10-65 years in 2002.
By the way table 1 includes also those aged 10-17 but the paper only deals with those beyond 17. The authors should either omit the youngsters from the table or do some changes in the article.
Table 3 is about physical activity both at work and in leisure time, if I understand the text correctly. This should be further clarified in the text, and probably indicated by a footnote in the table.

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:
I declare that I have no competing interests.