Reviewer's report

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

Version: 2 Date: 16 June 2006

Reviewer: Christian Meyer

Reviewer's report:

General
Again I like to highlight that this study is based on a large and valuable database. In particular in Germany such databases are rare. In general I think it is of value to publish a thorough description of the methods and the profile of health risk factors in this population (i.e. a "design-paper"). As this is a regional sample the simple prevalence rates are of limited interest. However, this descriptive data might be useful as a basis for further more specific publications. The revised paper improved in some points, but in my opinion especially the presentation still needs a revision.

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

- The aim or research question of the paper is still not well defined. The authors added several logistic regression analyses. By doing this analyses they explicitly test hypotheses, but nothing is stated in the Introduction. Nothing is written why they investigate this relation, why they choose the confounders, etc. Why predicting physical activity by smoking, alcohol use, BMI and not the other way round? These analyses seem to be arbitrary. This intensifies my initial problem with the unfocused writing up.
- Risk factors are here and there compared for age and gender differences without applying statistical tests. Again I suggest to report confidence intervals or standard-errors for their prevalence estimates, so anyone can evaluate the accuracy of these estimates.
- I am sorry, I am still not convinced that figure 1 make any sense. I suggest to add the age and gender distribution of the population to Table 1. So the reader can evaluate if maybe weighting is an issue in your sample.

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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)

- Page 18, "critical level of consumption is reached at 80 g/day": From a public health perspective much lower thresholds are regarded "critical" (British medical association 20/30 g; WHO 20/40g)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
Regarding your response to the suggestion to refer to the GBD study: I think it is really strange to reject the mayor source on disease burden because you don’t like the findings. By the way, if you look at the risk-factor rankings for industrialized countries I am sure you like this source.

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: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No

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