Reviewer's report

Title: Assessment of data quality in a European multi-centre cross-sectional study of quality of life of children with cerebral palsy

Version: 1 Date: 20 September 2006

Reviewer: Jeanne Landgraf

Reviewer's report:

General

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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)

This is a well written article with sound methods and analyses. I have a few minor comments. The article would be greatly strengthened and have wider appeal if a more compelling position were made with regard to the necessity of the work. It seems naturally intuitive that one would perform these analyses as a matter of course when performing any study for which data is collected across multiple countries - or even samples within countries for that matter. Is this not the case? Far more interesting would be the degree to which sampling bias may empirically affect ratings of QOL or other outcomes measures. Are your findings unique to registries in general? Wouldn't some of these issues you raise be mitigated by rigorous sampling methods commonly used for large scale epidemiologic studies (eg stratifying by block, neighborhood, age, gender, ethnicity or race etc) for which a registry may not be available.

Also, it reads as if the focus is really on the KIDSCREEN as your primary measure - or so it seems - that's not an issue - its just that this should be clarified in the title -- I am not sure why you mention the other measures and include them in Table 5 when there is no narrative really about them.

Page 4 - Background - I am a firm believer that children can self report and your paper is about a self reported measure (KIDSCREEN). (Actually perhaps a bit more description is needed as not all readers will be familiar with this measure). But the 2nd sentence as worded (suggesting that children with CP often have impairments of learning) lays the framework for a justification and argument against this tenant of thought. You also state that there are registries available for CP which reduce the risk of selection bias. Yet your study suggests otherwise. Please clarify. Finally, SPARCLE is not just about CP but children with any disability, correct? If so then a much a stronger rationale is needed for why CP is the focus of this paper. There are alot of conditions where impairment is evident. Shouldn't the same assessments of data quality be made for any study - irrespective of the child's condition?

Page 6 - why additional questions on pain? What's the rationale?

Page 6 - what do you mean by "other psychometric measures" in your statement that these were regarded as potential effect modifiers? Further clarification and explication are needed.

Finally, were you suprised by any of the findings? What are the practical implications for researchers?

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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:
I declare that I have no competing interests