Reviewer's report

Title: Injuries in Syria; first population-based estimates and characterization of predominant types

Version: 2 Date: 22 August 2005

Reviewer: Eleni Petridou

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)

This is a descriptive study presenting valuable data derived from a survey aiming to estimate reported morbidity and disability due to injuries in Syria, overall as well as by type of injury. Drawbacks in the estimation of rates and interpretation of results, however, may hinder the scientific validity of the paper. It is recommended that the manuscript be radically revised taking into account major compulsory revisions.

1. Recall and telescoping biases should be considered in the analysis and the presentation of data taking into account previous similar publications (e.g. Petridou a: Estimating the population burden of injuries. Epidemiology 2004;15:428).
2. Tables should be accordingly modified.
   a. The reader can be easily confused with presentation of data on disabilities and other studied variables only among respondents in the age range 18-65 in Table 1 and among all age household members in Table 2.
   b. It is also advisable that data for the three most common types of injuries are presented (too many non informative cells in the less frequent categories).
   c. It is not clear whether only statistically significant results of the multiple logistic regression models are presented in Table 3.
   d. Figures could be omitted and essential results presented in the text.
3. For reasons of comparability with WHO and other international studies, it would be preferable to present the data in the more customary age groups e.g. 0-4, 5-14, 15-24, 25-44, 45-64 (that is actually the completed 64th year, just before people turn 65)
4. Authors should also comment the likelihood of seasonality-linked variations given that the survey was performed at one time period.
5. Is there any difference in the estimated rates on account of the number of household members?
6. In the interpretation of results authors should consider the fact that survey presents reported injuries. They mentioned that age was related to injuries with the oldest age group being least affected. This underreporting of injuries may be attributed to sample selection or to other factors reflecting underreporting of injuries occurred in older persons, from cohabitant. Injury estimates for adults do not include injuries in elderly population. The age frame should be mentioned

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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)

1. “Use of household surveys to estimate injury morbidity in a Syrian city” would be a more appropriate title
2. Abstract: could be shortened without any loss of information (e.g. age range is mentioned twice).
Conclusion: …and the socio-cultural (rather than the study refers to sociodemographic characteristics)
3. Methods - analyses (page 6, line 8) Reference SPSS software
4. Injury incidence estimates should be presented by person-years at risk.
5. In the Discussion, authors state that “morbidity and mortality figures should be interpreted with caution but mortality figures are not easily discerned either in the abstract or in the Tables

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

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: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

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