Reviewer's report

Title: Cohort differences in disease and disability in the young-old: findings from the MRC Cognitive Function and Ageing Study (MRC-CFAS)

Version: Date: 3 April 2007

Reviewer: Katarina Wilhelmson

Reviewer's report:

General
The research question is well defined and very relevant (though not new, but it has not yet been clearly answered). The methods are appropriate. The description can be further enhanced, see comments below. The data seems sound and well controlled and the manuscript adheres to relevant standards for reporting. The discussion and conclusions are well balanced and adequately reported.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
1. Page 4, Disease, Paragraph 2. For those with moderate or severe cognitive impairment, how valid are their answers in the interview?
2. Page 5, Results: How were the age and gender distribution among the non-responders?
3. Table 1: How many were living in institution?
4. The second table 2 (= table 3?): The results in the second part of the table (Sociodemographics) how are they to be interpreted? They are mentioned neither in the results nor in the discussion, and the heading of the table does not explain enough.

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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. Page 2, Abstract, last sentence: The sentence is not complete
2. Page 6, Survival: Were there a significant difference in survival if only age and gender were adjusted for?
3. Page 7, second paragraph, line 2-3, ref 32: The study is not from Finland, it is from Sweden! (And there were fewer men in the later born cohorts with no diseases in that study.)
4. Tables: There are two tables 2 and no table 3.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
1. Table 2: The p-values seems superficial to me, since the CI are presented
2. Pages 4 and 5, Functional limitation and Disability: Mobility limitation is described under both headings, and I have difficulty to understand the difference between the two.
3. Page 5: Statistical methods and page 6. Disease, Functioning and disability: It is stated that the models for disease were adjusted for age and gender. I assume that this is also true for disability and functional limitation (as stated in table 2).
4. Were there any questions about symptoms? With more diseases diagnosed, their might be a reduction in symptoms (compare ref 32, in which there were more participants in later born cohorts having diseases, but fewer participants with many symptoms).

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

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