Reviewer's report

Title: Consistency Between Education Reported in Health Survey and Recorded in Death Certificate

Version: 1 Date: 10 July 2007

Reviewer: Robert Anderson

Reviewer's report:

General
This paper examines the consistency of education reported in the South Korean NHANES with that reported on South Korean death certificates. Overall, this paper is reasonably well written and the methodology is sound. However, I don't think the authors make a good case as to why this research is important and what it contributes to the existing literature - other than that this is a different data source.

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

1. The authors need to make a better case for the importance of this study. The authors state on p. 4 "...little has been published on the validity and reliability of education between health survey data and death certificate data." Other studies have been published using other data sources. Why is the fact that this is a health survey significant? Would one expect the results to be different or better in some way. This seems to be the primary justification for doing the study. Also mentioned by the authors (on p. 5) is that "...little is known about the misclassification of education by cause of death." Why is this important and why would one expect misclassification to vary by cause of death? The authors never say.

2. The authors need to discuss what others not studying South Korean mortality can take from this study. Are the results applicable only to South Korea? I think that it is a stretch to argue that patterns of misclassification ought to be similar across countries – the authors suggest as much, although I would argue that it is not only age distribution and educational categories that might result in differences. Differences in procedures for registering deaths and in processing the information may also be relevant. The fact that the results of this study are similar in many ways to those from other studies done in other countries is comforting, but does not necessarily indicate that these results are generalizable.

3. I am also concerned about the relatively small sample of decedents (n=513) and the relatively large number of covariates. I wonder whether the authors' inability to find significant effects for gender, age and duration of survey and death have more to do with the small sample than the lack of substantive effects.
Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

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 of limited interest

**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