Reviewer’s report

Title: All-cause mortality in the Aberdeen 1921 birth cohort

Version: 1 Date: 5 February 2008

Reviewer: Stig Berg

Reviewer’s report:

This is an interesting and important study for the understanding of the effects of early life conditions on survival in old age. The sample is relatively small and some of the loss of 1921 cohort members is problematic for the generalization of the results but it is difficult to do much about it. It is also discussed by the authors. The strength is the 1932 measures.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The title is too broad and ought to be more specific
2. The introduction is too much on mortality in general. It is to some extent a kind of prediscussion of the results. Both the introduction and discussion need to incorporate the vast literature on terminal decline on cognitive functioning, pulmonary functioning and health in general. As it is now the article does not relate to earlier important research. There are for example several articles in Journal of Gerontology, The Handbook of Psychology of Aging, 4th edition, and also several review articles in other journals. If it relates better to earlier research it will be a much more important addition to the knowledge about factors behind survival in late life.

Minor essential revisions

3. It would be good if a little more could be added on the ABC1921 study both in 1921 and at the follow-up
4. It would be good if a little more about the Moray House Test. What cognitive factors does it measure?

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: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

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