Reviewer's report

Title: Incidence rates of in-hospital carpal tunnel syndrome in the general population and possible associations with marital status

Version: 2 Date: 8 August 2008

Reviewer: Jane Frølund Thomsen

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Major compulsory revisions

1. The main problem is still the fact that we have no reason to believe that common house work as it is performed in most households poses any risk for CTS. Especially not for men. In well performed studies one will find a small excess risk for repetitive and forceful work but not for lighter industrial work. I find it a problem to hypothesize that domestic work is a risk factor when former studies of biomechanical exposure and CTS do not support this notion. I would certainly prefer a more open approach to the findings. If the authors can rule out serious data and/or methodological problems then the findings are interesting but their hypotheses must be more open. In recommending further studies (in the conclusion) it would be natural first of all to suggest studies reproducing the finding in another setting – the surprisingly consistent and unexpected findings taken into account.

2. The authors still need to present relevant information on data validity about marital status for the general population. I assume that these data were collected from ISTAT too but the information is sparse in the method section – it only says “demographic general population data”.

The information concerning missing data should be put in the text and information about missing data and data validity on marital status for the case group and for the general population should also be added.

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