Reviewer's report

Title: Over-indebtedness as a marker of socioeconomic status and its association with obesity: a cross-sectional study

Version: 1 Date: 6 March 2009

Reviewer: Sandra Plachta-Danielzik

Reviewer's report:

The manuscript of Münster et al. covers an interesting and new aspect in obesity research. In addition, the topic is current and the manuscript has a clear conclusion.

However, there are some concerns:

Major compulsory revisions:

1. The main concern is the comparison of the two surveys. The non-over-indebted group is a representative sample for Germany while the over-indebted group consisted of a sample from two German states. One of the states, “Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania”, has one of the highest rates of unemployment, and people from low social status as well as the highest prevalence of obesity. Thus, even non-indebted subjects from this state may have a lower income and higher prevalence of obesity when compared with Germany in total.

The authors have to show that the two surveys are comparable.

2. In addition, the response rate of the OI-survey was 39.7% only. Are there any information about the non-responder to quantify the bias? The low response rate of the OI-survey also indicate that the practical transfer to consider the debt situation in health research (as the authors concluded) may be difficult. It is already hard to get validated information about income of a subject.

3. The time span for which a subject is over-indebted may play an important role on the effect of obesity. Have the authors controlled for this?

Minor essential revisions:

1. The literature cited in the background to support the link between SES and health is not convincing. A better citation is for example:


Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely
related research interests

**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