Reviewer's report

Title: Demographic and circumstantial accounts of burn mortality in Cape Town, South Africa, 2001-2004: An observational register based study

Version: 2 Date: 26 May 2009

Reviewer: Brenda Shields

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Major Compulsory Revisions

1. In response to Reviewer 3 (4a), the authors wrote: “The study uses the overlap between CI ranges as an indicator of significance between respective rates and rate ratios (Brandstatter, E, 2999).” Overlap of confidence interval ranges is not a substitute for significance testing. There are many cases of confidence interval overlap where the corresponding significance test is non-significant, and many cases of confidence interval overlap where the corresponding significance test is significant. The authors may report the confidence intervals and describe comparisons of confidence interval overlap as they have done, but cannot state that results are statistically significant, or not statistically significant, unless they have run the appropriate significance tests and report the corresponding p-values.

2. The sentence on the bottom of page 8 that reads “Stata (Version 7) [20] was used to compare….by season” does not make sense as written. It is unclear what the authors actually did. Please rewrite this, using more than one sentence if necessary, and state very clearly and concisely what statistical tests were run, and how they were run.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. In the Methods section, please define “coloured”. How do they differ from “black”? In the United States, “colored” was once used to refer to blacks/African Americans/negroes.

2. Table 1: There is a footnote denoted by # that has no corresponding reference within the table.

3. Figure 1: The word “rate” is missing in the title; it should read “Distribution of burn mortality rate by age…”

4. Figure 1: Please add “person-years” after 100,000 in the y-axis title.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published
Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.