Reviewer’s report

Title: Does mild COPD affect prognosis in the elderly?

Version: 2 Date: 25 January 2010

Reviewer: Bo Lundbäck

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Reviewer comments to
"Does mild COPD affect prognosis in the elderly"
By Pedone C et al

The paper reports about survival in elderly subjects with COPD aged > 64 years. Focus is on mortality over five years in subjects with mild COPD. The study design seems to be a case-referent design, however, this is not clearly stated in the manuscript. The study subjects do not represent COPD in the general population in the studied age groups but out-patients in departments of Respiratory Medicine or Geriatrics. This is reflected for instance of the distribution by disease severity of the COPD cases. The main message is the authors’ statement that mild COPD does not affect survival in subjects with mild COPD.

Major compulsory revisions

1. There is too little information about the reference sample. How many were they? How were they recruited? And from what were they recruited? Were they patients who had attended the hospital departments? Were they randomly selected from population registers? Was the reference group stratified by age and sex? The reference sample and it’s selection must be much better described before an eventual publication. The gender distribution of both COPD patients and reference subjects in the two age groups must also be given.

2. The authors must be much more careful in their conclusions. The selection of cases from health care, the relatively short follow-up time, and the size of the sample do not allow generalization of the study’s results (the results are somewhat shaky due to low power). The authors must be clear on that point. The results are in no way conclusive but only indicate that mild COPD may not have a major effect on survival among elderly. Please, see both figures! The figures indicate an opposite result in contrast to the written conclusion.

3. Mortality data by sex must be given and their influence on the results. Mortality by age in men and women differ considerably in most societies.

4. The language, particularly the grammar, must be revised.

Minor essential revisions
5. The figure legends are incomplete. Do the survival curves express crude data, or are they adjusted? Please, be clear? Include also statistical information in the figures or in the figure legends.

6. Incomplete text after point 3 under “analytic approach”.

7. Last sentence in “pulmonary function tests”: “refusal” is mentioned twice.

Discretionary revisions

8. Numbers could be included in at least table 1.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**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.