Reviewer’s report

Title: Differences in classification of COPD group using COPD assessment test (CAT) or modified Medical Research Council (mMRC) dyspnea scores: A cross-sectional analyses

Version: 1 Date: 18 February 2013

Reviewer: Peter Kardos

Reviewer’s report:

Staging COPD according to GOLD 2011 consensus is controversial, the paper sheds some urgently needed light on the inherent difficulties with this staging system.

The paper is excellent written and I have just a few comments:

1. Major compulsory revisions:
   - The enrolment/selection of the patients is not clear (consort diagram?)
     Obviously, a number of outpatients of the respiratory department where recruited, irrespective of their diagnoses. Only two third had had flow limitation. Which patients were asked to participate? All patients of the clinic? What was the criterion to ask a patient? How many patients declined? Which % accepted to complete the questionnaires? Did the patients sign informed consent before using the questionnaires?
   - The retrospective analysis of exacerbations is a weakness of the study which could influence the staging, it should be stated.

2. Minor essential revision
   - The abstract sentence “The patients were categorized into A, B, C, and D according to the GOLD 2011” could be misunderstood, since pts were categorized twice according to mMRC and CAT, respectively

3. Discretionary revisions
   - There is a 30% proportion of non-smoking COPD. Is this subgroup different according to the distribution of stages vs. smoker?
   - According to the suggestion for double assessment of symptoms like exacerbations: for primary care setting, where the majority of COPD pts are treated, even the A-B-C-D staging may be confusing; different categories for both symptom and exacerbation assessment could be more demanding and as yet almost without treatment consequences.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

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