Reviewer’s report

Title: Long-term follow-up in European respiratory health studies - patterns and implications

Version: 1  Date: 29 January 2014

Reviewer: Bo Lundbäck

Reviewer’s report:

Overall the paper is good, clear, well-written and deserves to be published as the number of longitudinal studies are increasing, and the reports of them as well. Overall the paper is good, also the references mentioned are appropriate. I have some comments, however, I have no major concerns. The introduction and material & methods are OK.

Minor essential revisions:

1. Consequences of bias of baseline "under-estimation" and "over-estimation" in longitudinal studies could be better discussed and exemplified in terms of effects on incidence, remission and risks (the latter seems not to be a major problem in the studies the paper is based upon) in the discussion section.

2. There are published longitudinal studies, for instance on COPD also from the neighbouring countries of the first author, that have clearly recognized and discussed differences in baseline prevalence among all who participated in an initial study and the prevalence in the initial study among those who participated at a follow-up study. At least some of them could be referred to.

3. The text to the results section is absolutely too long. All, or most, of the significant results must not be mentioned in the text as they all can be found in the tables.

4. The discussion section has in parts a tendency to too much repeat the results. Please, consider that.

Discretionary revisions:

5. The authors refer to methods by Nielsen et al (ref 8, 16-19) in the methods section. Please, give a short summary.

6. I am not 100% happy with the terms "under-estimation" and "over-estimation". Of course they can be used, however, are there better terms you can find for this important item?

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.