Reviewer's report

**Title:** Chronic musculoskeletal pain predicted hospitalisation due to serious medical conditions in a 10 year follow up study

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 3 January 2010

**Reviewer:** Peter R Croft

**Reviewer's report:**

This is a clearly written account, using new data from a well-known population study, which makes a significant and important contribution to the literature about comorbid complications of musculoskeletal pain. I liked especially the two pain groups analysed – much of the existing literature is only about CWP. So this paper expands our knowledge about the whole spectrum of msk pain.

I have very few comments since the science and discussion both looked good. However there is one query and a couple of comments:

1. How sure are the authors that the population followed up were free of the medical conditions at baseline for which hospitalisation was identified subsequently? At times they talk only about the incidence of hospital care, but at others they appear to suggest that they have studied the incidence of the actual conditions during the follow-up period and I am not sure what the basis was for this – is it based on the hospitalisation data, or on self-report data at baseline, or perhaps on primary care records?

2. The tables interestingly provide data stratified by the confounding variables – presumably with each stratified analysis adjusted for the other confounders? Although the authors have to be careful with multiple subgroup comparisons, the age-stratified analyses in particular are very interesting and suggest that much of the excess risk occurs at older ages – including a marked risk of neoplasm which I do not think the authors should ignore, given the current debate about the link between CWP and cancer. The issue of disease pre-existing the pain survey (point 1 above) of course becomes more important the older the age-group, but so do possible pathological explanations – e.g. the suggested link between osteoarthritis and cardiovascular disease for example, since OA must be the major cause of msk pain in older people. I would like to see a section highlighting these age-stratified results and discussing their interpretation.

3. Some of the English needs a little tightening although in general it was good.

**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’