Reviewers report

Title: Hidden consequences of olfactory dysfunction

Version: 2 Date: 24 June 2013

Reviewer: Steven Nordin

Reviewers report:

This study has investigated consequences of olfactory dysfunction by analyzing data obtained through the Internet from a large number of subjects expected to have olfactory dysfunctions. It makes a nice contribution to the field, and has with several strengths, such as its broad approach and large database. The questions posed are satisfactory defined, the data are sound, the discussion and conclusions are at large adequately supported by the data, and the writing is clear. However, there are certain shortcomings of the manuscript that need to be addressed, such as a careful background to the issues studied, a more informative methods section, and further mentioning of limitations of the study.

Major compulsory revisions

1. Although the background section is clearly written and interesting, its disposition is not well balanced. It describes very carefully the causes and treatments of olfactory dysfunction, but mentions basically nothing about prior research on consequences of olfactory dysfunction. Since the focus of this paper is on consequences rather than on causes and treatments it is strongly suggested that the background is revised by shortening the sections about causes and treatments, and by including a section about consequences.

2. The method section should include more information on how the “qualitative” data were analyzed. As an example, when conducting a study with content analysis, the following steps are taken: (1) all texts are read through to obtain a sense of the whole, (2) the text from each participant is sorted into content areas, (3) each content area is divided into meaning units, (4) the meaning units are condensed and abstracted into codes, (5) the codes are compared regarding similarities and differences and sorted into categories. Information of this kind is needed to enable evaluation of the results. My overall question is on what basis the results were categorized into the sections 3.1 – 3.6 and their subsections. Was this based on a procedure similar to that described above as an example, or was it based on results from prior studies? If the latter, please give a basis for this in the background section.

3. The manuscript is very long (with increased risk for loosing readers because of this), and the authors should therefore try to shorten the manuscript as much as possible. For example, by referring to the figures the description on pages 8 and 9 can be shortened considerably.

Minor essential revisions
1. Since no testing of the sense of smell was actually conducted it is uncertain to what extent the participants really have an olfactory loss. This is a limitation that should be clearly stated in the discussion section.

2. The structure of the manuscript becomes unclear due to having a section “Results and Discussion” and another section being “Discussion”. Perhaps simple call the latter “General Discussion”?

Discretionary Revisions: None

**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