Reviewer's report

Title: Prescribed drugs use among first generation elderly immigrants in the Netherlands: more seems not enough

Version: 1 Date: 28 December 2009

Reviewer: Montserrat Rue

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The question that the authors want to investigate is well defined. The objective of the study is to assess whether ethnicity explains the variation in the utilisation of prescribed drugs, focusing on underutilisation in ill subjects.

- Major Compulsory Revisions

Abstract

1. The background section should include the objectives of the study. The last sentence of the background section “Utilisation is explained....” seems to be a conclusion. If the authors want to reflect the results of the study this sentence should be moved to the Conclusions section. If not, it should be the second sentence of the background paragraph.

Methods section

2. The authors should include information about the Netherlands’ health system. Utilisation of health services and drug expenditure are associated with cost. Is the health system universal and free? Are there co-payments? Are prescribed drugs free in the Netherlands for old people? Do people aged 55-64 years pay the same as people aged 65 and older?

3. In the Data source and population section, at the end of first paragraph, it is said that equal numbers of subjects per stratum were selected. But, at the beginning of the second paragraph, the number of subjects in each group are different, especially Turkish (808) and Moroccan (455) subjects. What explains these differences? Where there not enough Moroccans in the census to be selected?

4. The authors mention that the questions that belong to the acculturation block are validated. Can they report a bibliographic reference or a study that supports this statement? Also, the authors recode the scores obtained for some variables of the acculturation section into three categories (poor, mediocre and good for mastery of Dutch language or traditional, moderately traditional, or modern for attitudes regarding family care, male-female roles and family values). How were the cutpoints of the categories decided?

5. It is not clear how the authors categorised individuals as having or not having mental health conditions. The MSC ranges between 0-100. Did the authors
choose a cutpoint? Is there a recommended cutpoint for this instrument? I am not familiar with it.

Results section

6. The first paragraph in the Analysis section states that the aim of the first analysis was to explain drug utilisation for mental health and chronic conditions separately, including both individuals with and without self-reported conditions. From Table 2, it seems that the dependent variables are use of drugs for mental health (yes/no) and use of drugs for chronic diseases (yes/no), respectively. It is not clear who are the 691 individuals included in this analysis.

7. Although the authors mention that in the second analysis the objective is to assess the variables associated with drug underutilisation, it is difficult to interpret the ORs of Table 3, since absence of underutilisation means presence of use. I think that it would be better to use presence/absence of drug utilisation in Table 3 and in the Results section.

8. Did the authors assess calibration and discrimination of the logistic regression models? These measures should be included in the results section.

9. In the results section (last paragraph before the location of Table 2), the authors mention that they found two statistically significant interactions, between Turkish origin and number of chronic diseases and between Moroccan background and number of chronic diseases. Since number of chronic diseases is a discrete quantitative variable, how should the odds ratios reported for these interactions (0.44 and 0.56, respectively) be interpreted? The same question applies to the OR=0.95 for the interaction found in the mental health model.

10. In Table 3 being male does not seem to be associated with drug underutilisation for DM. The last paragraph of the Results section should be reviewed.

Discussion section


12. In the fourth limitation, the authors state that the reasons for non-response did not differ according to ethnic background. But the results show high variability between groups for the reasons: “respondents could not be reached” and “refused participation”. The sentence seems inconsistent with the authors statements.

- Discretionary Revisions

Methods section
13. Non-response due to not being reached during fieldwork was 35% among Turkish subjects and 16.2% among Moroccans. What can explain this difference? In reference to refusing participation, what may explain that Dutch people have a much higher rate of refusal?

14. The number of interviewers is very high (average of 7 interviews per interviewer). Is there a reason for that? It seems that variability in response may have been affected by variation in the interviewers’ performance.

Results section

15. In Table 2 there are two logistic regression analyses for each group of individuals. It is logical that when the variable language and ethnic background are included in the model (block 2) there is a change in the coefficient of the language variable. Since the coefficients of the other variables do not change much, I would present only the results for block 2. Table 2 would be easier to read and interpret.

- Minor Essential Revisions

Abstract

16. In the conclusions section there is a typo in “unterutilisation”.

Background section

17. Third line: change [e.g. 3] with [3] and move it to the end of the sentence.
Fourth line: add “that” between thresholds and immigrants.

Methods section

18. In the Measurements subsection, 8th line, there is a typo in “psycopharmaca”. In the same subsection, the 4th paragraph starts with “Third third”, which should be changed to “The third”.

Results section

19. In the last line of the Results section, instead of “lower utilisation”, should say “lower underutilisation” or “higher utilisation”.

20. In Table 1, the percentages of subjects aged 55-64 are empty, and the percentages of men and women do not add up to 100.

Discussion section

21. There are first, third and fourth limitations but not a second. It would be easier to follow if the authors insert a “second” in the corresponding paragraph.

22. In the 8th paragraph: “It also possible” lacks “is”.

References
23. Check capital letters in some references (for example 24 and 29)

General comment

24. English needs to be reviewed by a native speaker.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests