Reviewer's report

Title: Gender differences in health care use among the elderly population in Norway and Finland. A cross-sectional analysis based on the HUNT Study and the FINRISK Senior Survey.

Version: 1 Date: 5 June 2006

Reviewer: Hynek Pikhart

Reviewer's report:

General

The paper assessed the gender differences in use of health care among the elderly population in Finland and Norway. The overall structure of the paper, methods and results are described appropriately, and the results are then reasonably discussed. I have just few comments and suggestions.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Although the authors discuss their results quite extensively, I would expect clearer attempt to explain why the results from Norway and Finland quite substantially differ. What is the difference between these two populations that would explain such major differences in the results?

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

- Table 1, Norway, Respiratory disease - I think there should be only "***" as 0.01>p>0.001.
- Table 2. OR (95% CI) could possibly have 2 decimal places as it is not sometimes clear whether 1.0 is below 1 or above 1.
- Figure 1. Graph could be prepared in better software, the technical quality should improve. In addition, I would welcome confidence interval shown in the graph. Would that be possible to include?

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

- I think the authors could add more detailed description of data. Primary sources of literature used by the authors might be rather uneasy to obtain by some readers. It might help to write more here although it may be repeat of what was written in those local Finnish and Norwegian publications.
- I wonder whether the authors could adjust for real age within their 5-years age groups. I do not expect very different age distributions within 5 years age groups but it is one way for improvement.
- Additionally I wonder whether the authors have any other variables available such as health behaviours (smoking and alcohol consumption) that could be used in the analysis and help to explain the differences between results in Norway and Finland.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

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