Reviewer's report

Title: The Burden of Disease and Injury in the United States - 1996

Version: 1 Date: 31 March 2006

Reviewer: Theo Vos

Reviewer's report:

General

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
This manuscript has obviously been written as a project report rather than a journal paper:
· It has no abstract
· It repeats much of what is written elsewhere (e.g. the basic GBD methods)
· The methods section on YLD/diemod gives a textbook-like introduction but fails to inform the reader what was done for the US study
· In the results section quite a bit of space is reserved to present differences between death, YLL and YLD patterns which no longer have any ‘novelty value’ for a journal paper
· Intros to results sections repeat methods
· Discussion is a rehash of results and does not critically examine the methods nor does it place findings of this study against previous findings

In its current form not acceptable as a journal article. The authors should consider a major rewrite of the material as a journal article concentrating on what was particular to the US study (e.g. the DW validation, the CVD redistribution algorithm) and potentially making e.g. the ethnic comparisons its main focus. I have no problem having a relatively large amount of basic methods and results added as an annex.

Other issues:
· Comparisons between ethnic groups and with other OECD results are mostly made for rankings; age-standardised death/YLL/YLD and DALY rates would be more informative as are presented in fig17, fig 20-23 for selected conditions and for total DALY rates between ethnic groups which curiously only appear in the discussion section
· The CVD redistribution methods are not fully explained:
  o Are age, sex and race also included as independent variables?
  o Why are lung cancer rates (a proxy for smoking? and if so, why?) and garbage code ‘rates’ (or proportions?) included as independent variables? I have my doubts about the inclusion of the rate/proportion of garbage codes as this is highly correlated with the % coded to IHD, the dependent variable

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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)
· Following the GBD hierarchy, perinatal conditions should not appear in a ranking list of diseases (i.e. comparison ought to be with all cancer rather than individual cancers)
· There are quite some examples of sloppy editing/presentation, e.g.
  o death (should be deaths) on p18 (line 5 following heading A1) and p19 (line 14)
  o p36 (line 9) causes (should be cause)
o figure 2, Y-axis legends should not include (thousands)
o figure 18 has legend as well as labels
o figure 21: sloppy position of legends
o page 41 neuropsychiatrique?

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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.