Reviewer's report

Title: Social Cohesion, Belonging, and Changes Therein Predict the Well-Being of Community-Dwelling Older People in the Netherlands over Time

Version: 2 Date: 28 November 2014

Reviewer: Piers Dawes

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the invitation to review this interesting paper. The authors reported on the association between social cohesion and belonging and well-being in older adults.

The paper was clearly written, and the topic is of interested for the journal readership. The design and theoretical basis seemed sensible. The following suggestions have been categorised according to the journal's recommended categories. However, the authors may choose to ignore them if they feel justified in doing so.

The main issues I had ("Major compulsory revisions") were with some aspects of design and analysis:

i) Description of the sample and sampling bias

The sample was recruited from 4 districts of Rotterdam. Why these 4 districts? The response rates were ~60%. How representative was the sample of the general population? Was there any indication of response bias? Could there be a differential in response bias that could affect the results?

ii) Analysis

The authors selected the 10% worse neighbourhoods based on social cohesion and social belonging scales. The authors then compared social cohesion and social belonging in the 10% worst vs all neighbourhoods (Table 2); that is a circular comparison. I suggest that the authors delete it and focus on the other analyses. With the retest data (assessed with simple paired t-test), was there any evidence of selective drop-out that might have biased the results?

Minor points ("minor essential revisions")

i) Could the authors please articulate more clearly what that rationale was for the chronically ill and post-hospitalisation groups was? (line 131)

ii) Line 260. Why is it important to understand the effects of social environment on well-being?

iii) Line 262..."supporting previous findings". Could the authors please emphasise what the novel aspects were of the present study?

Thank you again for the opportunity to review this paper.
**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests