Reviewer's report

Title: Chronic Diseases are Important Determinants of Self-reported Health among Older Adults

Version: 3 Date: 6 May 2014

Reviewer: Terry Lum

Reviewer's report:

SRH and presence of chronic health conditions are all indicators for health. There is no doubt that these indicators are empirically associated. Finding their association from a survey does not provide any new insight on older people's health condition. Similarly the association between stressful life event and poor self-reported health is also well documented. The manuscript does not break any new ground to improve our understanding of self-reported health or health condition of older people.

Overall the manuscript is very fragmented.

Major Compulsory Revisions

p. The background and literature review section is very fragmented.

p. 7. How did the researchers know that a participant had a chronic disease? Was it self-reported? Or did the researchers obtain the information from participants' medical record?

p.7 it is unclear why the authors need to recode the SRH into a dummy variable for poor health, instead of using it as an ordinal variable.

p.7 it is not clear why household size was used as an indicator for life stress.

p.8. Please specify how the combined effect were tested.

p.9 the p value for APOE4 is 0.086. Since the sample size is relatively large, there is no reason to use 0.10 as the cutoff. Again, in the logistic regression analyses, the p value for APOE is 0.054 (model 1) and 0.053 (model 2), and should be regarded as insignificant. Conceptually there is no reason to believe that the APOE (unknown to older people) would directly affected older people's self-reported health. If there is any effect, it is likely due to unmeasured health condition that is associated with the APOE.

p.10 the finding that cigarette smoking and older age were associated with lower risk of heart diseases is against what we have known in many year of research. It is very likely that there are unknown issues in the data collection or statistical analysis. Please elaborate and explain what is going on.

p. 11 Please clarify how did you test the combined effect.
Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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:

No to all.