Reviewer's report

Title: Contribution of chronic diseases to the disability burden in Belgium

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Reviewer: Heather Allore

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Contribution of chronic diseases to the disability burden in Belgium

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
   Yes

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
   The methods are well described. On page 6 under Statistical analysis is stated “Analogous to the underlying cause of death, in which one disease is assigned as underlying cause of death according to the death certificate, we aim to attribute each disability case reported in a survey to a single cause, taking into account that individuals can have more than one disease (comorbidity) and that disability can be present in individuals without any disease [4].”

   Only MAJOR Compulsory point
   However, I think a limitation should be the attribution to a single condition. Other authors Tinetti et al JAGS 2012 and Lin et al AJPH 2013 both used a modification of the average attributable fraction that allows for multiple conditions contribution to a binary outcome. Tinetti writes in some detail as to the limitations of WHO death certificate formats and as to their inappropriateness for older adults with multiple conditions. Thus, the methods presented here will attribute the disability to the most associated disease some of which are more likely to occur in combination as part of a syndrome than others. These limitations should be included.

   2. Are the data sound?
   Yes. As the youngest age group has a much greater spread these uneven age effects need to be interpreted with caution. There should be a note of this.

   3. Do the figures appear to be genuine, i.e. without evidence of manipulation?
   Yes

   5. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
   Yes

   6. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
   In general it is very strong, but see point 2 above.

   7. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
Yes, please note the suggestion under point 2.

8. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
Discretionary Revision
Yes, the literature review is fairly comprehensive however it lacks the afore-mentioned articles which may be of use to some readers.

9. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
Yes

10. Is the writing acceptable?
Yes, on page 8 change “were fitted” to “were fit”.

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest 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.