Reviewer's report

Title: Body mass index and depressive symptoms in older Koreans

Version: 2 Date: 6 November 2014

Reviewer: Chifa Hung

Reviewer's report:

Noh et al. studied the relationship between body mass index and depressive symptoms in older Koreans and found a U-shaped association between obesity status and CES-D score, which is different from previous reports.

I have several suggestions and comments on this manuscript.

1) The definition of obesity in Asian countries (Major Compulsory Revisions)

Previous study (WHO expert consultation, Lancet 2004; 363:157-163) has suggested different BMI cut-off scores should be applied to Asian populations. The authors applied the same criteria as Caucasian population, which represented different health risk for Asian population. The authors can do a similar analysis using different overweight/obesity criteria for Asian.

2) The definition of older Korean (Discretionary Revisions)

It is not clear why the authors chose 50-year-old as a cut-off point for elderly. The authors should supply a reference for this.

3) The correlation between self-reported BMI and measured BMI (Discretionary Revisions)

There might be a discrepancy between self-reported BMI and measured BMI. It will be great if the authors have a sub-population data to calculate the correlation.

4) Broader discussion (Major Compulsory Revisions)

The authors aimed to discuss the relationship between depression and BMI in Asian elderly but failed to discuss the existing research fully. For example, at least three different studies investigated the similar issues in Japan (Kuriyama et al., Journal of psychosomatic research, 2006, 60, 229-235), Hong Kong (Li et al., international journal of geriatric psychiatry, 2004, 19, 68-74) and Taiwan (Kuo et al., Psychological Medicine 2011, 41, 16665-1676) should be mentioned in the discussion. In these studies, several definition of elderly and obesity were applied and the authors should discuss the difference and the strength of their current study.

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: N/A