Reviewer's report

Title: The correlates and determinants of men's health literacy concerning chronic diseases: a systematic review

Version: 1 Date: 12 February 2015

Reviewer: Lindsay Kobayashi

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Introduction - the authors need to provide more convincing rationale for the sole focus on men. Although incidence and mortality due to ischemic heart disease and type 2 diabetes mellitus may differ by gender, they are not solely issues of men's health. More importantly, there is no indication that the predictors of health literacy or that levels of health literacy differ by gender. See Paasche-Orlow et al. J Gen Intern Med 2005;20:175-84, Kutner et al. 'The health literacy of America’s adults: results of the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy'. To justify their objective with respect to men's health literacy, the authors should further justify why health literacy in particular may lead to sex- or gender-based differences in IHD and T2DM incidence.

2. Introduction - the authors are correct in identifying the controversy surrounding the definition of health literacy. There are many different conceptualisations of health literacy, ranging from functional, reading comprehension and numeracy skills to communicative and critical assessment skills. In order to conduct research on health literacy, one of the several definitions and operationalisations of health literacy needs to be chosen so that a tangible construct is available to work with. The authors have not done so, and rather have vaguely referred to other reviews that have synthesised several definitions in frameworks. Furthermore, any researchers in this field would say that this review is of knowledge about ischaemic heart disease and type 2 diabetes mellitus, as the concepts of health literacy and health knowledge are typically differentiated between in the health literacy field. The authors must either settle on a definition of health literacy and include studies that have measured health literacy according to the definition, or reframe the review as being of knowledge about these chronic diseases.

3. Methods - the quality criteria chosen for this review seem to be inappropriate. Observational, cross-sectional studies are not inherently of poor quality when assessing the relationships under consideration, which are mostly of time-invariant sociodemographic factors.

4. Predictors of health literacy - the authors need to provide rationale for examining the predictors of health literacy that they did. As such, they have no hypotheses about what might influence health literacy among older adults. For
example, why was obesity considered a predictor of health literacy, i.e. why would being obese lead one to have low health literacy skills? Surely this relationship would work in the opposite direction, if anything.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.