Reviewer’s report

Title: Assessing skin disease and associated health-related quality of life in a rural Lao community

Version: 0 Date: 03 Sep 2018

Reviewer: Barbara Schuster

Reviewer's report:

This study provides data about the prevalence of skin diseases in a rural village in Laos. As there is no data available about the prevalence of skin diseases in Laos yet, this study contributes to a better understanding of the medical needs regarding skin diseases in this country. However, the purpose of the study was to "assess a representative sample of the rural Laos population", which unfortunately has not been achieved. First, the examined village was chosen due to several specific reasons such as previously having taken part in research, comparably large population size and having a primary school. This raises the question if the village is really a representative example of a Laos village. The authors argument that the age distribution in the study sample matches the age distribution in the Laos population, however the chosen age groups are quite wide, especially the group 15-64 years. Consequently, a comparison of the age distributions in the sample and the general population based on this grouping is not precise enough. Second, the study participants don't necessarily seem to be representative of the whole village population, as only 340 villagers of the around 1000 inhabitants were assessed in this sample. The authors explain that this is partly due to the fact that a lot of people travel to Thailand for work or education. This leads to biased results, as older and potentially less healthy people might have remained in the village and participated in this study. Similarly, the assessment of health-related quality of life was not representative, as the decision to ask a participant to fill in the DLQI questionnaire was made by the physicians with no pre-specified criterion, which among other reasons resulted in only half of the participants filling in a DLQI questionnaire.

In conclusion, the results of this study do not really allow an estimation of the prevalence of skin diseases in rural Laos, which reduces the informative value of the results.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

Does the work include the necessary controls?
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Yes
Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
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No

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I am able to assess the statistics

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