Reviewer’s report

Title: Systematic review of disability weight studies: comparison of methodological choices and values

Version: 1 Date: 27 September 2013

Reviewer: M.E.A. Stouthard

Reviewer’s report:

The manuscript by Haagsma et al. addresses an interesting topic, namely the comparability of disability weights studies and resulting YLDs. The manuscript is well structured and written in an clear and accessible style.

However, the conclusion of the authors is rather disappointing and poor. They simply state that large differences exist in methodological design choices. Their conclusion does not examine the issue of comparability.

This conclusion that methods differ in itself does not justify publication of the manuscript.

Major compulsory revisions

1. I would have liked to see recommendations, suggestions and/or comments on the methodological design methods used in the different studies, in terms of quality and comparability. The only such comment is given on the health state description methods used. A mere enumeration of methods is not very informative to the reader and does not add to the literature on DALYs.

2. The validity of the disability weights, resulting from the different methods used in the studies should have been addressed by the authors. The mere conclusion that the disability weights vary in value is insufficient. Based on the results of the literature review, a validity study on a selection of disability weights reported should be added, be it with empirical or theoretical data.

3. The authors conclude that disability weights vary widely between studies, but provide no data to substantiate this conclusion. Table 1 should be expanded with statistical information on this variation.

4. Towards the end of the manuscript, in the last paragraphs of the DISCUSSION, the authors seem to lose interest in their own findings. References to studies are lacking, and the discussion on valuation methods seems rushed. E.g. what about the different trade-off methods used?

Minor essential revisions

1. References are missing in the text in several paragraphs, eg. on page 9, line 18 [The results of two of these studies .... from these two groups.]

2. Some references in the REFERENCES appear more than once.
Discretionary revisions
None

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**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.