Reviewer's report

Title: Determining the interviewer effect on CQ Index outcomes: a multilevel approach

Version: 2 Date: 4 November 2009

Reviewer: Howard Degenholtz

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Major Compulsory Revisions

1. It is not clear what is meant by the statement “For this research no ethical approval was needed.” First, it should read ‘approval’ or ‘review’. Second, authors should indicate whether they are referring to an Institutional Review Board or the Dutch equivalent. Third, some justification for review not being necessary must be included. In the US, certain types of research are exempt from review by the institution’s IRB, however, that judgment is made by the IRB itself, not by the researchers.

2. The authors do not adequately explain how interviewers were assigned to residents. What does “changing pairs” mean?

3. Authors do not explain how the sample of facilities was selected or how residents were selected.

4. Please present evidence that facilities were ‘randomly sorted’ based on quality.

5. In the description of the models, do authors mean to say ‘random intercepts’ for Models 1, 2, and 3?

6. It is not clear how the ranking was done, or how the ‘stars’ were applied. This does not show up in the results section.

7. It is not clear why the authors did not consider the institution as a ‘level’ in the hierarchical model. Since there is likely some shared variation within organizations, and not every interviewer worked at every nursing home, it is possible for incorrect attributions due to mis-specification of the random effects structure.

8. The presentation of the tables is not typical and hard to understand. Dependent variables should be in columns. It is not clear why results for each interviewer are presented. Are these fixed or random effects?

9. On Table 6, authors should present all coefficients with standard errors, confidence intervals or asterisks.

10. It is not clear how ‘type of care’ was coded (which was the reference category?)

11. Table 5 should be revised so the headings describe the models.

12. Can the authors explain why the ICC for Professional Competency and
Security goes up between Model 2 and Model 3?

13. On Table 6, how do authors interpret interactions between resident characteristics and interviewer?

14. Please report actual changes in -2 Log Likelihood values along with the appropriate test statistic.

15. It is not clear why the authors recommend that two or more interviewers perform the survey.

16. In general, the results are quite stable, with few changes in ranking. This is positive.

17. It is not explained how “Knowledge of Health Care” was operationalized or measured.

18. It is not clear what is meant by interviewers who had conducted more than 70 interviews…Is that total lifetime interviews?

19. Where do the

Minor Essential Revisions

1. The manuscript needs to be carefully edited for proper grammar and usage.

2. Please describe the difference between ‘nursing home’ and ‘home for the elderly’ for readers not familiar with your care system.

3. Please justify the focus on 'experienced' reviewers.

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

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.