Reviewer’s report

Title: External validation of a Cox prognostic model: principles and methods

Version: 2 Date: 21 November 2012

Reviewer: Glenn Heller

Reviewer’s report:

I seek further clarification to points 5 and 7 in my initial report.

5. To incorporate the variability of the PI estimate into the hypothesis test for model fit, I believe all that is needed from the derivation dataset are the estimated regression coefficients and the estimated variance-covariance matrix of the estimated regression coefficients. Do the authors believe that it would be difficult for an analyst to obtain access to the estimated variance-covariance matrix?

7. The authors response to my comment implies that they have implemented an IPCW modified Harrell’s c statistic using STATA. I looked at estat concordance and could not find any documentation that stated IPCW is an element of the computation. Even if I overlooked this documentation and STATA has the IPCW version, the biased unweighted version of Harrell’s c-index is routinely computed using other commonly applied software such as R and SAS. Thus, if in fact the authors do use an IPCW modification of Harrell’s c-index, they should explicitly state this in the manuscript.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests' below.