Reviewer's report

Title: The promise of record linkage for assessing the uptake of health services in resource constrained settings: a pilot study from South Africa

Version: 1 Date: 24 February 2014

Reviewer: Rainer Schnell

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0. My main objection to this paper is the lack of a clear question of the paper in the abstract and in the introduction. The paper answers a question, but this question is not stated clearly.

1. Neither the abstract nor the conclusion point to the most interesting aspect of this study: The use of human fingerprints as gold standard for record linkage. I would prefer to see this feature in the title of the article.

2. The description of strategy 16 is incomplete. Please explain your steps more clearly.

3. In order to interpret a logistic regression, the model fit must be checked. Significant coefficient don't have a valid interpretation if the model does not fit. Please provide goodness of fit measures for your logistic model.

4. The p values of the chi-square test in annex 1 seem to be neither the values for a test of independence (would be wrong here) nor the values for a test of goodness of fit for the observed distribution. So please explain your computations and check the values.

5. n should be used instead of N in all tables.

6. The conclusion on page 3 should be the same conclusion on page 18. The conclusion on page 18 is too general.

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.