Reviewer’s report

Title: Incorporating natural variation into IVF clinic league tables: The Expected Rank

Version: 1 Date: 28 January 2009

Reviewer: Omar Bouamra

Reviewer’s report:

The authors have tackled an interesting and controversial issue. In my view “League table” is not a ‘politically’ correct concept to use for comparing institutions performance. The concept of ranking is too subjective and lead to more confusion. I would rather focus on performance level rather than rank. A high rank does not always mean a high performance level.

Technically speaking the authors did a good job; I however, have some comments

Discretionary:
1 - page 4 typos: First line “Data were …..originally from …”
2 - Page 9 2nd line “We also see … perform in a very similar fashion, such as clinic D and E”.
3 - page 5 “Where F (Phi is more appropriate for normal CDF) is the normal cumulative distribution…”
4 - For Greek letters it’s better to use the equation editor in MSWord (object) rather than symbol as font (see the equations in page 5).

Minor:
1 - Figure is interesting to display as long as the number of clinics is low. It would be very difficult to represent the graph if there are, say 100 clinics to compare. The same applies for Table 2.
2 - For Table 2, the upper part of the matrix is showing 1% isn’t 100% instead?.
3 - I hope that, in the near future, the authors would carry on this work using case-mix adjustment for more credibility.

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

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 interest.