Reviewer’s report

Title: Many Missed Opportunities for Earlier Diagnosis Occur in Patients Diagnosed with Colorectal Cancer

Version: 2 Date: 25 April 2008

Reviewer: Alvaro Figueredo

Reviewer’s report:

Topic: Interesting, important, practical

Research question: well defined but directed to intermediate goal (diagnosis) and not to the final goal (survival) - see below

Background: well done.

Design: adequate. But define anemia, especially degree, as it is a major factor in delay of diagnosis.

Analysis: correct; mostly descriptive. Association of advanced stage vs failings not done.

Comments: Clear in regard to system failures. How about patient's failures; need for education or further discussion by physicians? Problem of chart review is that the notes may not describe all that was discussed during the interview.

Standards: Well written report with all usual sections include

OVERALL ASSESSMENT: Interesting study. Clearly you demonstrate there are significant failings in obtaining an earlier diagnosis. Do these failings matter? You have to prove that these failings increase "advanced stage" of the disease, or even better, that these failing cause shortened survival.

Some typo errors (note capital letters):

page 6, line 6: ... provided AT THE VA medical center...

p 9, 2nd paragraph, line 1: delete A MISSED

p 11, 2nd pg, line 3: .. providers can easily BE overwhelmed ...

line 5: full stop should be after (38;39)

line 8: delete comma befor (42-47)

3rd pg, line 4: full stop after (510

p 12: Limitations, line 3: We reviewed, HOWEVER, all primary (delete however at the end of the sentence)

last line: ... consistent with A cohort...
Table 3, line No screen age >5 <80: the number of patients must be 40
Table 4: columns 3 and 4 are a subset of column 2 and therefore should be so marked.
Table 5: HEMATOCHIEZIA

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**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.