Reviewer's report

Title: Health care restructuring and family physician care for those who died of cancer

Version: 1  Date: 4 November 2004

Reviewer: Raymond A. Viola

Reviewer's report:

General

This is a well-written report of a health services research project that is timely and important, by a group that has a proven track record doing this type of research. The authors carried out secondary analyses of linked population-based data to examine changes in the provision of services by family physicians to patients who died of selected cancers in the province of Nova Scotia during a six-year period of health care system restructuring. Although there are limitations to research using linked administrative datasets, patterns and trends in health services can be identified for further research.

Major Compulsory Revisions

None

Minor Essential Revisions

None

Discretionary Revisions

1. It may be helpful to explain why data were reported for the four cancers that had the highest mortality rather than for all cancer causes of death.

2. Were the data analyzed to examine for possible regional differences in family physician involvement with community care and for regional differences in hospital admissions and lengths of stay?

3. Consider removing the brackets in the long, bracketed section “End-of-life care…care in the community” in the first paragraph on page 4.

4. Should the word “will” be removed from the first paragraph on page 4 in the sentence: “Multiple providers area involved in such care and will include….”

5. In the second paragraph on page 4, the word “almost” may be appropriately changed to “over” in the section: “…from 19.8% in 1992-93 to 30.2% in 1997-8, an increase of almost 50%.”

6. At the top of page 7, the word “diagnoses” is plural. Should it be in the singular?

7. Is it possible to provide a reference for the statement in the first paragraph of the Discussion section on page 10 that reads as follows: “We know from work employing the same database that the number of visits made to a specialist physician has not changed significantly over the same time period”? 
8. Can a reference be provided for the following statement in the last paragraph on page 10: “For all types of patients in the province from 1992-1999, the total number of office-based, home and long-term-care visits has declined slightly”? 

9. Can a reference by provided for the following statement in the second paragraph on page 11: “Provincial information suggests this trend was true for non-cancer patients as well”? 

10. Can “Mike Joyce” be further described in relation to the “personal communication” provided by him in the third paragraph on page 11? 

**What next?:** Accept after discretionary revisions

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.