Reviewer’s report

Title: The impact of Irritable Bowel Syndrome on health-related quality of life: A Singapore perspective.

Version: 1 Date: 31 May 2012

Reviewer: Marco DiBonaventura

Reviewer’s report:

The objective of this study was to examine the relationship between IBS and health-related quality of life in Singapore. Although the topic is of interest, as data on IBS in very limited in Asia, I have several concerns with this study as summarized below.

Major compulsory revisions

1) I found the writing in need of improvement; typos and awkward sentences made it the paper difficult to follow at times. I would strongly recommend an editorial review by a member outside the research team prior to a resubmission.

2) The biggest concern I have is the lack of external validity. The study sample was participants from the National Foundation for Digestive Diseases Symposium. Although the authors acknowledge this threat to external validity, I think this seriously compromises the interpretability of the findings. It can’t be assumed that relationships between IBS and health-related quality of life would be identical between the present sample of actively engaged patients attending a digestive disease symposium and the general population.

3) I found the backwards stepwise method a curious choice. Any reason a standard multiple regression model (using an enter method) was not used? Given the criticisms of both backward and forward selection methods, I think more detail on this decision is warranted.

4) The description of some of the results is odd (page 6, paragraph 4). It reads as if health-related quality of life is a predictor of IBS (“The adjusted odds of having IBS were 2.38 times greater for a person having some mobility problems as opposed to a person having no mobility problems…”). I don’t believe the authors are suggesting that mobility problems cause the appearance of IBS. Instead, I think the authors are suggesting that IBS is associated with increased mobility problems. As a result, I think the regressions are conducted incorrectly (or just reported incorrectly).

Minor essential revisions

5) IBS has previously been linked to a number of comorbidities. More clarify about how “significant illnesses” were assessed would be helpful. If it was merely the presence versus absence of a “significant illness”, there may be an
overestimate in the health-related quality of life burden as a full range of comorbidities was not assessed (using a Charlson comorbidity index or something similar).

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

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**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