Reviewer’s report

Title: Medical conditions leading to admission to a nursing home

Version: 1 Date: 18 February 2009

Reviewer: Charlene Quinn

Reviewer’s report:

Review
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BMC Geriatrics
Medical conditions leading to admission to a nursing home

Major compulsory revisions

Overall comments:

The author writes about an important topic. However, the writing is not focused starting with the specific aims of the study. The author has much work involved in the analyses and the writing. I would suggest the aims of the manuscript be more specific as discussed in comments below. There may be something the author can salvage from this preliminary writing. In addition, the author should spend time reviewing more current literature available through the US NLM pub med website, including references from the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, Geriatric Nursing, Journal of the American Medical Directors Association and Health Services Research. In addition writing the paper such that a more general audience, i.e. outside of Belgium and Europe, would understand the terms, would make this a more useful manuscript to the scientific literature.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?

The author’s specific aims for the analyses and the manuscript them are not well defined. This creates a problem for the author to write the manuscript. I would suggest the author narrow the analysis on change in trends for mental health and focus on depression and dementia, for example. The author could still use other study findings as descriptive of the population. If diabetes is an interesting finding, maybe that should be the focus. This would require more analyses around population characteristics, comorbidities, service utilization related to diabetes conditions. Suggestions for aims:

1. Identify and describe medical conditions in XYZ population (be specific about the setting and population being described)
2. Observe changes in trends (prevalence?) over 12-year period for XYZ condition (s).
3. Discuss contributing factors to explain the trend.
2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?

No. The author should follow a structured outline for the methods section. This would help the writing.

3. Are the data sound?

No. It's not clear to the reader how the data was collected, what was standardized, etc. Is it a secondary data analysis of administrative data? Really not clear.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?

No. It might help the author to this website for assistance on health services methods and many examples of reporting.

http://www.hsrmethods.org/

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

The author has some interesting points but the writing is not well done and supported by the data. There are also some findings which are not discussed. For example why would there be a decrease in hip fractures? Are these patients being cared for in different settings or there really a change in the population trend?

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?

Some.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?

No. See previous suggestion on reviewing more current literature.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?

The title and abstract are what appealed to me as a reader.

9. Is the writing acceptable?

No.

**Level of interest**: An article of insufficient interest to warrant publication in a scientific/medical journal.
Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
'I declare that I have no competing interests'