Reviewer's report

Title: How can we improve targeting of frail elderly patients to a Geriatric Day-Hospital Rehabilitation Program?

Version: 1 Date: 17 April 2010

Reviewer: Ian Cameron

Reviewer's report:

Minor Essential Revisions

It is worthwhile to conduct the analyses presented in this paper in view of the limited proven effectiveness of Geriatric Day Hospitals.

1. It is important to characterize the group who improve following Day Hospital attendance. The authors could comment further whether it is their opinion that people with lower test scores on admission are a group that Day Hospitals should target for intervention, or whether this finding is a function of the test measures used (noting that the authors have discussed these issues). Furthermore the assessments used mainly relate to functioning at a limited activity level. Should consideration be given to including outcome measures that provided assessments at an ICF participation level?

2. There are other models of assessment and rehabilitation for older people. In some countries there is significant investment in ambulatory rehabilitation services for older people in which programs are provided at home or treatment centres (for example, see Crotty et al Age and Ageing 2008; 37: 628–633 doi:10.1093/ageing/afn141). The authors could comment whether their findings might be applicable in other settings where there are therapeutic programs provided to assist older people to improve functioning.

3. There is a significant amount of missing data (102/335). These data are probably not missing at random and details of patients for whom missing data applies should be presented and briefly discussed.

4. In Table 2, it is not clear why negative values are used when functioning has improved.

Discretionary Revisions

5. The criteria listed for improvement in each of the assessment measures are appropriate. However, the extent of improvement to reach each criterion varies. The 6 minute walk test, in particular, may be more responsive than the other measures and thus is more likely to be a significant predictor of improvement. The reviewer is not sure that this matters, but the authors may wish to comment further on this.
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.