Reviewer's report

Title: Potentially inappropriate prescriptions (PIPs) for older patients in long-term care

Version: 1 Date: 16 March 2004

Reviewer: Chunliu Zhan

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?
Yes.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient
details provided to replicate the work?
Yes.

3. Are the data sound and well controlled?
Yes.

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

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

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

7. Is the writing acceptable?
Yes.

This is a well-written, thorough study of inappropriate medications in the
long-term care patients in metropolitan Quebec and a valuable addition to
the growing literature in this area. One revision suggestion to the authors
is that, to help readers understand their findings in comparison to
previously published results, they should make clear in the manuscript (1)
how their definition of PIP differs from others, and (2) how their
time-window of screening differs from others. Some previous work only
examined inappropriate drugs while this manuscript looked at dosing,
duration, drug-drug interaction as well as inappropriate drugs. Without
noting this point, the statement in the manuscript such as "PIPs have been
estimated to affect 4.8% to 52.6% of the elderly population [5-12]" (Page 4,
Line 7) and the comparison of the findings from this study to earlier ones
could misinform and mislead the readers. The time-window of the screening
directly affect the statistics -- naturally the longer the screening window
and higher the PIP rates. The previous studies quoted were mostly screenings
in one-year time-window. This study covered patient medication use in a
21-month period (April 1995 to December 1996, Page 5, Third paragraph). This
is a perplexing problem. On one hand, it is ideal to present year-based
statistics to make better comparison with others' work. On the other hand,
it is well acceptable to present the findings as the authors did. At
minimum, the authors should make it very clear in the text that their
time-window is longer than others' and, as a result, their PIP rates may be
higher. For future research, the authors should be more serious about the
time-window up-front.
Some minor points:
Page 5, third para: Are there 33 or 71 LTC facilities in Quebec City?
Page 6, Third para, Line 5: "An initial univariate", should be "bivariate"?

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
None