Reviewer’s report

Title: Functional assessment of older patients in the emergency department: comparison between standard instruments, medical records and physicians perceptions.

Version: 4 Date: 4 June 2006

Reviewer: Manish Shah

Reviewer’s report:

General
I appreciate the significant revisions made by the authors after the previous round of revisions. The modifications made significantly improve the manuscript. This manuscript has limited generalizability beyond Spain and other countries where emergency medicine is practiced in the manner described (non-emergency medicine trained staff, very extended evaluation and treatments for patients without admission to an inpatient service, etc). However, it does add to the literature and would be useful to have published.

major compulsorily Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
None

minor essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
1. In the final paragraph of the introduction, the second and third sentence are confusing. I would rewrite: "Secondary objectives include: 1) detecting staff; 2) measuring the prevalence of records; and 3) examining whether status"
2. First paragraph of the study population: 30% of THESE patients Overall 10% of the patients.
3. The term ‘observation area’ has a different meaning in the United States (and Canada also, I think), where it is considered a short stay inpatient unit. Please use this term with care, and consider modifying it to prevent confusion with the international audience.
4. There are a number of grammatical and typographical errors in the revised sections that must be fixed.
5. Please remove the sentence in the limitations "However, Spanish ED physicians are trained in different medical specialties; a specific ED rotation is frequently included. A few rotations in the ED is not equivalent to a dedicated residency program.
6. How reasonable is the quality of the proxy respondent? Some literature does show that they are not necessarily as good as portrayed in this paper.

discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
None

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
None.