Reviewer's report

**Title:** Effect of home care services on the care needs levels of elderly Japanese: A longitudinal study

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 25 May 2009

**Reviewer:** Masafumi Kuzuya

**Reviewer's report:**

The manuscript has been improved very much after excellent revision. The manuscript presents an empirical evaluation of an important topic - the effect of community-based services on the care needs of recipients. However, as described in previous review, the causal effects that might underlie the association between service use and poor outcome (decline of care needs levels) is still unclear. Care recipients who use various community-based services may tend to decline care needs levels as a consequence of their worse health, worse physical and cognitive functions, or worse informal care levels. Thus, community-based service use may derive from caring patients in worse health and in worse informal care levels, and therefore at greater risk of decline care needs levels, and not contributes to the outcome directly.

P6, the first line, “1,474 of the LTCI service users” should be “1,474 who were approved for LTCI. Because it is clear for the following sentence not the all of 1,474 use LTCI services. Is it correct?

P 9, line 25-PP10, line 9, This reviewer believe that data of Table 2 & 3 must be comparison between SI and D groups. The first sentence “There were no home based services ----.” What does this mean??

Table 2, and 3: This reviewer is not sure that Wilcoxon Rank Sum Test is suitable for the comparison analysis of categorical variables between two groups. If the Wilcoxon Rank Sum Test was used for nonparametric numeric variables of two groups, this reviewer would like to know the mean and SD of each group.

Table 3. The variables used for multivariate analysis were any services with p-values <.025 in univariate analysis. However, there are no data of univariate analysis. Therefore at least variable used for mutivariate analysis should be described in the text.

P11, line 2,5,: would be useful to add the mean and SD values of duration.

P11, line 6, 7, How and what variables were used for the adjustment?

P9, line 5,6, and P11, line 10- : more clear definition of “discontinuous users “ was required. If the user stopped using service only one month among 11 months, does this user defined as “discontinuous users”? ]

P9, line 6,7; How to compared between two groups?
In abstract and discussion, p12, line 9, p13, line 12, p14, line 3, p15, line 21 and 23; “not prevent” is not suitable for this manuscript. Because the results indicate that the service use deteriorates their care needs levels compared with nonusers. As authors mentioned in the discussion, there are number of limitations in this study. Therefore, the conclusion should tone down.

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