Reviewer’s report

Title: Health status transitions in community-living elderly with complex care needs: a latent class approach

Version: 2 Date: 25 October 2008

Reviewer: Len Gray

Reviewer’s report:

Minor Essential Revisions:

The abstract should state explicitly the purpose of the research, not just what was done. Was it to group patients using the best available methodology, in which case the rationale for choosing LCA vis a vis other methods should be clearly enunciated. Or was it to explore the efficacy of LCA in a group of older persons with complex needs is classifying them into meaningful groups?

Were the phenomena which were characterized by scalar measures (SPMHQ, GDS, etc) included in the model as dichotomous or continuous variables?

It is implied that Mplus software was utilized to conduct the analysis. This should be explicitly stated – perhaps in the first paragraph of the “analysis” section.

Discretionary revisions:

Alternate methods for “grouping” individuals are alluded to in the background. For the less statistically savvy reader, a brief discussion of how LCA might provide an advantage over other methods might be useful e.g. factor analysis, cluster analysis. I think this might be implied, in part, but it may be useful to be more explicit.

The authors could comment on how the groupings resulting from analysis the SIPA cohort might apply to other populations of older people. They acknowledge the use of the SIPA population as a “limitation”, and that studies are required in other populations. Would they like to make an explicit comment on how generalisable the reported findings might be?

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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.