Reviewer's report

Title: Functional outcomes of general medical patients with severe sepsis

Version: 2 Date: 26 July 2013

Reviewer: Catherine Lee

Reviewer's report:

General Comments:
In essence, this is an important paper. Patients who survive sepsis have long-lasting burdens of functional impairment, psychological distress, and cognitive dysfunction. These burdens have been described after critical illness, but little has been reported specifically about the functional outcomes after non-critical illness sepsis. The authors have chosen an important research question, and took advantage of some marvelous local resources, such as a >92% completion rate of surveys of activities of daily living at hospital admission. However, some additions and improvements to writing will help this paper see its potential.

Minor Essential revision:
1. Cohort development is presented in a confusing way. Recommend a cohort diagram. It should be more clear exactly what eligibility criteria were for a patient to end up in the final cohort of 64. Abstract should include a statement of study population

2. Writing is often clumsy and jargon-filled.
a. "Angus-positive" and "Angus-negative" sounds like grades of beef, not like clear descriptors. (page 3).
b. "kappa" is not a verb (page 10, in the sentence "The three hospitalist reviewers had a kappa of 0.86 for disposition location."

c. "the functional outcomes of our study population were worse to a degree that reached statistical significance" is a meaningless sentence. Statistical significance is not a test of magnitude.

3. Tests of agreement should be included in the methods section

4. References could be improved-- would be good to include more work on hospital outcomes of general medical patients and potential interventions (most literature is in older adults, but still relevant

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published
Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'