Reviewer's report

Title: The influence of nativity and neighborhoods on breast cancer stage at diagnosis and survival among California Hispanic women

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Reviewer: James S Goodwin

Reviewer's report:

This is a nicely written ms. Very clear, and it hasn't been done before.

My major concern is with selection biases. The authors should read an article by Sharon Giordano in Cancer published in 2008 (or perhaps 2007 or 2009 -- it shouldn't be too hard to find) on selection biases in such studies. It is called something like "use of observational data to assess treatment outcomes: a cautionary note". In it, the authors show how these biases can persist in the face of propensity scores, etc. They strongly recommend that such studies divide deaths by cause of death (cancer vs non-cancer). If the treatment has a strong effect on deaths from non-cancer causes, even after all the controls such as propensity score matching, then that casts real doubt on the validity of the findings. For example, aggressive treatment for cancer shouldn't decrease deaths from diabetes, heart disease, etc. I realize that in this study of metastatic breast CA that the overwhelming percentage of deaths may be from cancer, so maybe this strategy will not work because of small numbers. But the authors should at least try it, and also report on what percentage of the deaths were from cancer, the cause of death data in SEER-Medicare are from the national death index (death certificate data), and have been validated in several studies of SEER data.

Otherwise I have no suggestions for change. Nicely done.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I have no competing interests