Reviewer's report

Title: Diagnosis delay of breast cancer and its predictors: who is responsible?

Version: 1 Date: 30 June 2010

Reviewer: Jo Waller

Reviewer's report:

Major compulsory revisions

This paper addresses an important issue and one has not been studied in the Malaysian context. However, I felt that overall the paper was too long, and much of it did not relate to the title. I also felt that the use of terms like ‘responsibility’, ‘blame’ and ‘fault’ which are used throughout the manuscript might not be particularly helpful. We know that the reasons for patient delay are complex – it’s often too simplistic to say that it’s the patient’s ‘fault’.

1) It would be useful to include reference the Anderson model of delay, and to clarify what is meant by consultation delay, diagnosis delay and system delay. There are several stages involved in ‘patient’ delay, and it would be useful to highlight these (Anderson, Cacioppo & Roberts, 1995).

2) Please explain how the sample size was determined (was a power calculation used?), and describe the validation of the measures.

3) The Results section is brief, and in fact only the final paragraph addresses the issue raised in the title of the paper – i.e. the predictors of delay.

4) The Discussion section felt much too long compared with the Results section, and it often wasn’t clear whether findings being described related to the present study or other studies (in part, a language issue, I think). I’m not sure that having the tables summarising other studies was useful (Tables 6 and 7). On p.17, the authors refer to findings which are not described in the Results section (prescribing antibiotics, hormones etc). Perhaps more could be included in the Results section?

5) On p.22 the authors describe ‘some’ of the respondents being interviewed retrospectively, but in fact all were reporting their delay in help-seeking retrospectively, and this is of course a limitation.

Minor essential revisions

The paper is very well-written, but at times the English is not quite fluent and the manuscript would benefit from proof-reading by a native speaker.

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.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests