Reviewer's report

Title: Unknown Staged Cancer in the United States: A Population-Based Study

Version: 1 Date: 9 June 2011

Reviewer: Tim Aldrich

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Discretionary Revisions: A comment would be useful for exclusion of Hispanics and other ethnic groups, given the ‘other’ SEER publications on those specific sub-populations.

The potential for assessment of location/place variables was completely missed. Urban/rural seems highly feasible. The ‘crying need’ for a look at Appalachia is missed!?!?

Minor, Essential Revisions: Reference to z-test in methods for comparisons over time of proportions unstaged. I am confident that a comparison of proportions was actually used, in the form of a Z-test, but I believe that one remark should be clarified.

Interchangeable use of unknown stage and unstaged could be tidied up. The exclusion of the DC only and autopsy cases clearly connects with the ‘unknown’ category consideration. I suggest simply staying with ‘unstaged’ through out.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.