Reviewer's report

Title: Breast cancer stage at diagnosis and area-based socioeconomic status: A multicenter 10-year retrospective clinical epidemiological study in China

Version: 3 Date: 20 February 2012

Reviewer: Sandi Pruitt

Reviewer's report:

The authors have been very responsive to my review and suggestions. I have three additional, minor revisions.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. The new dependent variable includes early stage (TNM 0 and 1) and “non-early” stage (TNM 2, 3, and 4). It is more common in my experience to classify cancer stage as early (TNM 0, 1, 2) versus “late” (3, 4). It would help to provide some rationale for why stage was classified in this way, such as a citation or reference. This is particularly true given that multiple versions of AJCC staging were used during the study period and TNM stages 2 and 3 may be less consistently discernable across the entirety of the study period. Also, on page 5, please indicate which versions of AJCC were employed during the study period.

2. The following details could be added to page 5: who did the abstraction of the data using the CRF forms; and how were they trained (systematic training?) Was reliability of the coding checked in this study or in another study (the authors provide a reference regarding reliability but little information about what it represents)?

Discretionary Revisions

3. For clarity, and to allow the table to stand alone, the title of Table 5 could be amended to indicate that the results represent “multivariable logistic regression” results.

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 declare that I have no competing interests.