Reviewer's report

Title: Missed Opportunities: Racial and Neighborhood Socioeconomic Disparities in Emergency Colorectal Cancer Diagnosis and Surgery

Version: 1  Date: 27 June 2014

Reviewer: Talar Markossian

Reviewer's report:

The study uses SEER-Medicare data to examine racial and neighborhood differences in emergency CRC diagnosis and surgery. Below are specific comments:

I. Major Compulsory Revisions

A) General comments

The manuscript, at times, suffers from poor sentence structures and grammatical errors (e.g. comorbidities, might have more than one) making it difficult to read and follow.

B) Introduction

1. The authors need to note about the study population for references #6 and #7, using data from which sources?
2. Better organize the introduction section so that each paragraph communicates one complete idea.
3. The study objectives at the end of page 4 are not clear and the evidence supporting the study hypothesis should be referenced.

C) Methods

1. It is unclear what the authors mean on p.6 that they excluded patients without year 2000 census tract, are information for these Census Tracts missing in the US Census data?
2. The sentence describing about potentially preventable hospitalizations on page 8 is unclear, what do the authors mean by ‘compared to those with one or more to those with no preventable hospitalizations.”
3. Consider calling unadjusted model instead of ‘empty model’
4. It is not clear if the authors retained the main effects of race and neighborhood in the interaction model, they should have retained.

C) Discussion

The discussion and conclusion sections will need to include discussion about the direct practical and policy implications for the study within the current health care context, reporting racial and geographic disparities in access to care is not novel.
Also, the data years the authors have used are relatively old (1991-2005) and study findings might not be generalizable within the current health care context (the economic downturn of 2007-2009, health care reform initiatives, etc.). The authors will need to discuss how study findings might still be applicable within the current context and highlight better how this study is in particular different than the other studies they have referenced.

II) Discretionary revisions

Most studies suggest retaining tumor characteristics variables (such as stage and grade) even though these might not be significant in the bivariate analyses, because these variables are most likely associated with outcomes (despite the nonsignificant bivariate analyses).

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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

Declaration of competing interests:

No to all of the above.