Reviewer's report

Title: Access to Eye Health Services among Indigenous Australians: an Area Level Analysis

Version: 1 Date: 16 November 2011

Reviewer: Jose Leopoldo Ferreira Antunes

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting manuscript assessing a relevant hypothesis on race and health equity. Authors succeeded in formulating a problem in public health and in gathering a relevant database. The text is well organized and is easily read. The statistical analysis is appropriate. I contend that this study is a prospective contribution for the planning of eye health services.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Not a single word was spoken on the risk of ecological fallacy. As areas with a higher proportion of Indigenous population had lower rates of eye health services, authors concluded that Indigenous had lower access. This conclusion is solely presumptive; no evidence was presented to indicate specifically which is the racial status of individuals that used eye health services within each area. Limitations of ecological assessments (as regards the risk of ecological fallacy) should have been addressed in the Discussion. Conclusions drawn by this study may be tempered by criticism; authors should not have easily concluded that “The level of disadvantage experienced by Indigenous populations is more severe than for other Australians, although there was evidence that a high proportion of Australians are disadvantaged in relation to cataract surgery”.

Minor Essential Revisions

I may be getting old and neurasthenic; I found disgusting that you stated that Australia is a developed country and compared some health statistics between Australian areas and WHO guidelines for Africa.

Discretionary Revisions

Please inform how remoteness and the socioeconomic indices for areas have been assessed.

Please clarify for the international reader the codes that you have indicated throughout the text: AIWH, ACT, AN-DRG, C16A, C16B, 10900, 10918, and so on).

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Brazil.
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.