Reviewer's report

Title: Microcytosis and possible early iron deficiency in paediatric in-patients: a retrospective audit

Version: 2 Date: 24 March 2009

Reviewer: Martin V. Pusic

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions: NONE.

The paper reads very nicely. Well done.

Minor Essential Revisions:

>> Typo first line of page 4

>> We used the z-test (StataCorp, College Station, TX) [19] -- the z-test is not proprietary to Stata. I would either specifically reference the stata manual where you can document that the z-test is appropriate to these data or find a similar reference elsewhere. You can separately state that you used Stata to perform your analyses. I would also drop the reference to "prtest" from the abstract where it will only serve to confuse.

>> In the scatterplot, I would re-draw it with the y-axis starting at an MCV of about 60 since MCVs below that have no meaning. Would allow better resolution of the datapoints.

>> For the scatterplot, the sloped parts of the green line do not have any meaning (ie the lower limit of normal doesn't incrementally rise or fall where there are sloped areas to the line. I would just put in a gap or extend the horizontal line. The figure should stand on its own so that there should be a reference to where these values come from.

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