Reviewer’s report

Title: Does place of residence affect risk of suicide? A spatial epidemiologic investigation in Kentucky from 1999 to 2008

Version: 1 Date: 1 December 2011

Reviewer: DeWayne Derryberry

Reviewer’s report:

i) It would be nice to include medians (perhaps in parentheses) as well as means when reporting average ages.

ii) Twice the phrase “t-tests for unequal variances” (lines 146, 177) was used, I assume the authors are testing for means and not variances. Perhaps they should just say: “t-test (unequal variance was assumed)”, or just “t-test”. It does not matter much which test they used, a t-test with or without equal variance, since the tests almost always produce very similar results except for small sample sizes.

iii) I assume the “ranges” given (lines 252-254) are actually confidence intervals, they should probably be identified as “95% intervals”. If they are not confidence intervals, or if the intervals differ from 95%, they might want to be more specific.

- Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

None

- Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

none

Overall recommendation –

I think this paper does a good job of presenting an example of a complete analysis of clusters. The scan statistics used is superior to many other methods for detecting hot spots. This is a reliable approach to preliminary investigation of differential suicide rates over large regions.

Quality of written English: Acceptable