Reviewer's report

Title: The effect of modifiable risk factors on geographic mortality differentials: a modelling study

Version: 1 Date: 29 March 2011

Reviewer: Shona Kelly

Reviewer's report:

I have reviewed this paper and it appears to be modelling for the sake of modelling which is frustrating because it initially appeared that the authors were going to validate their model against actual mortality data. I can't see what this analysis provides that is any more useful than actual data which has already demonstrated repeatedly that rural and remote areas have a higher death rate. The data sample wasn't great enough in rural and remote areas to be able to clearly show any differences.

In addition, they make several claims that are really not supported by what is presented.

1. "remote and rural" are rolled together (assuming "outer regional" is equivalent to rural) and I don't have any real feel for the differences in population density so comments about 'remote' Australia are difficult to evaluate.

2. their conclusion about interventions is not really supported by the data as presented in their tables. I don't see a sufficiently massive differences in rates that would justify the massive excess costs for reaching these rural areas.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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