Reviewer's report

Title: Medical Care Usage and Self-Rated Mental Health

Version: Date: 4 January 2004

Reviewer: Fiona M Alpass

Reviewer's report:

General

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

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

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

Page 1: Hypotheses - The author does not cite any literature or make any arguments in support of these two hypotheses. There needs to be some justification in the introduction for hypothesising these relationships.

Page 2, paragraph one: The author states that the participants were screened for mental status. Does he mean cognitive impairment as noted in the following paragraph, or did he in fact measure both cognitive impairment and mental health status as part of the screening procedure? If mental health status was also screened for, what are the consequences for possible selection bias? Could the author clarify whether one or both were screened for and how this was done.

Page 3, paragraph one: The author states that the mental health variable was dichotomised but does not give an explanation for why this was done. Obviously in using logistic regression this is necessary, however the author needs to provide some explanation for why this was necessary (i.e. if a continuous mental health variable was maintained then hierarchical regression would have been possible). Describing 44% of the sample as having poor mental health when some of them may have indicated they felt downhearted and blue only "a little of the time" appears rather arbitrary. Could the author please justify the dichotomy of the variable and provide percentages of those in each of the six likert categories.

Page 3, paragraph two: Again, some justification for dichotomising the satisfaction variables is required.

Page 6, paragraph one: Could the author please discuss why it may be that "persons who had more medical visits, and who had low satisfaction with health care were at risk for feeling downhearted or blue".

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

None