Reviewer's report

Title: Status and perspectives of hospital mortality in a public urban Hellenic hospital, based on a five-year review.

Version: 3  Date: 17 November 2007

Reviewer: Tsung-Hsueh Lu

Reviewer's report:

General
The revised manuscript is much more appropriate in interpreting the proportional mortality.

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

1. Can the authors add one more information, i.e., the time interval between date of discharge with date of death? Were there many people who discharged from the hospital and died one month later without visiting the hospital? In most countries the death certificates of these deaths should be issued by medical examiners or coroners, how are the situations in Greece? Similarly, can physicians in the hospital issue death certificates for those died from unnatural deaths (external causes of death)?

2. I am not very comfort about the multiple step regression analysis. It's confusion to use ICD-10 chapters as exploratory variables to predict length of hospitalization time. I suggest delete of this analysis and delete table 5 and Figure 3 because this study is not a study assessing factors affecting the hospitalization time. It's another important management issue.

3. Table 1, it's not necessary to have such detail classification of age groups which would make the presentation too complicated and overload the readers. The same is for Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4. It is authors' important job to digest and extract the results and presented the most important information to audience. One practical suggestion is to group those categories with small number of deaths. Remember that you are presenting results to international readers instead of to the managers or doctors of your own hospitals. Readers will not care some trivial information.

4. In the same token, it's not necessary to have such systematic and meticulous discussion of each chapter of causes of death. Please focus on only some causes of death of particular implications not only to readers of Greece but also to readers from other countries.

5. Figure 1 could be deleted. I did not see any discussion on seasonal variation
of deaths. It's another topic with long list of papers and it's beyond the scope of this study.

6. I suggest of separate Figure 2 into two figures. One for chapter IX, II, IV with high number of death and another for X, XI, XIV, XX with low number of death. Readers could not see any changes by age for those cause of death with small number of death. The authors can also consider of grouping the age groups.

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

7. It's not necessary to have arrows in Figure 2.

8. There are too many references and many of them did not very relevant to this study. Please try to focus on only small number of important issues.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

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

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'