Reviewer's report

Title: Burden of morbidity in an individual perspective - the case of sick-listed patients in primary care

Version: 2 Date: 9 August 2008

Reviewer: Barbara Starfield

Reviewer's report:

Major compulsory revisions

The paper needs to be entirely re-written and reviewed by some one with English expertise. The subject matter is interesting and innovative, and deserves adequate exposition. Some of the problems include:

1. What is meant by 'epidemiologic follow-up'? this term is used several times but with unclear meaning. Moreover, I do not detect anything related to 'follow-up' in this paper.

2. Delete the second paragraph under Adjusted Clinical Groups, as the third paragraph repeats the same material.

3. The word 'Allott' is used but the correct word is 'allocate'.

4. What is meant by 'sick listed'?

5. Regarding reporting from every episode. Who defines an episode? How is it identifiable in the public reporting? To what extent by limiting the reportin to the results of an 'episode' might signs and symptoms be underestimated because they are assigned to a diagnosis later on?

6. The Results section needs much better exposition. Each and every table and Figure have to be explained so that the reader knows what are the findings being reported. Table 2 is unintelligible as it is and the graphs need to be interpreted.

7. I believe the word 'panorama' should be 'pattern'.

8. I am not sure that 'individual perspective' is a correct description of what is observed, because the morbidity categorization can be used for subpopulations and populations as well. I think what is meant is 'patient, not disease, perspective'. The focus is on the patient, not on the disease, and it is not unique to 'individuals', as it can apply to morbidity burden in populations just as well.

9. The section on Main findings seems to be in the wrong place---it should be part of Results. The authors need to clearly shown that there is a 'dissimilar pattern of morbidity...' The Discussion section should present the ramifications of these and other results.

10. The authors indicate that there are differences between certificate and patient record with regard to musculoskeletal system and connective tissue, but Table 1 shows very little difference, and surely not a significant one. On the other hand, category XVIII seems quite different. Please better describe the findings and their
implications for understanding illness.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I am a co-developer of the ACG system. My university licenses it to a company but I have no financial interest in that company.