Reviewer’s report

Title: University hospitals as drivers of career success: An empirical study of the duration of promotion and promotion success of hospital physicians

Version: Date: 8 January 2014

Reviewer: Guy Brock

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Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The main issue with this paper is that the analysis needs to be redone using an appropriate method for time to event data, e.g. a Cox regression analysis with time-dependent covariates. The authors claim to have used survival analysis methods, but in fact used logistic regression on the dichotomous outcome rather than the actual event time. The time-dependent nature of data was seemingly handled by creating multiple observations for each subject corresponding to different time periods, which artificially inflates the sample size in the logistic regression (c.f. Table 3, where the sample size is 3,024 rather than 324). The authors should also use appropriate methods for visualizing time to events (promotion to chief and senior physician), e.g. Kaplan-Meier or cumulative event (one minus survival) curves (probably the latter would be more relevant in this case). The results will need to be reassessed once this analysis is redone.

2. The authors introduce a number of time-dependent variables in the Methods section, which becomes difficult to follow. The authors should create a table to organize and describe these, both how they are constructed and the supporting rationale for inclusion.

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.