Reviewer’s report

Title: The experience of linking Victorian EMS trauma data

Version: 1 Date: 9 September 2008

Reviewer: David Clark

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The authors briefly report their experience with linking EMS, hospital, and registry data on injured patients in the state of Victoria, Australia.

Discretionary Revisions:
1) The authors never define what is meant by “deterministic”, “probabilistic”, and “manual” methods of record linkage, which would be helpful for readers unfamiliar with this methodology. A reference to one or more general reviews of the subject (e.g., Clark, Injury Prevention 2004) might suffice for this as well as enhance the relatively brief background discussion.

2) More credit should be given to the previous similar work from Western Australia, including that reported by Ferrante et al. (Reference 11), and updated by Rosman et al. (Accident Analysis and Prevention 2001).

3) It is rather difficult to follow exactly how the authors evaluated the results of their linkage. It might be useful to have Venn diagrams or other graphical depictions of how many people were recorded in each database, how many appeared to be recorded in more than one database after linkage, and how many should have been recorded in more than one database if linkage had been perfect. There is no discussion of whether any of the “successful” matches were false-positive on clerical review.

4) Table 1 does not add much useful information, and the last page (trauma triage algorithm) seems completely irrelevant to this report.

5) In general, it may be useful for other jurisdictions to be informed what was learned by this effort in Victoria, but the authors never say whether they thought record linkage was worthwhile or what advice they would offer their colleagues other than to improve EMS data quality.

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.