Reviewer's report

Title: Health Status After Cancer: Does It Matter Which Hospital You Belong To?

Version: 1 Date: 1 March 2010

Reviewer: Brett Sheppard

Reviewer's report:

Major compulsory revisions

1) One element of the results involves differences across catchment areas, however, the paper states that this does not necessarily correlate with treatment hospitals. Therefore, conclusions about patients outcomes and employment status can't be made based on catchment area because they were not treated there.

2) The exclusion criteria of age limits the interpretation of the results. The conclusion would be strengthened if the exclusion criteria became those without pre-diagnosis employment, instead of age.

3) Table 2 and 3: Statistical values are difficult to interpret. If these results could be simplified, and expressed in a more widely known term such as an Odds Ratio or a p value, it would help with understanding the results.

4) Please separate out the discussion from the results section. For example paragraph 5 under Variation and Quality of Care, compares the findings with the literature, which should be reserved for the discussion section.

5) If you could stratify the population by disease severity, the results would be more meaningful. For example, comparing a patient with widely metastatic disease versus someone with very localized disease, should dramatically affect their future employment.

6) Overall statistical analysis is difficult to understand. This is a clinical paper, so reference to the article that defined the equation is appropriate (so that if readers are really interested in the statistics behind it they can read the original article), so some of the definition of the actual equation could be left out. More importantly, you could then include more of a summary of WHY you used this equation, what its strengths are, and why it was appropriate for your analysis. Also, by doing this it may make the results tables more understandable.

Minor compulsory revisions

1) Figure 4 - seems that the legend is mislabled

2) Please define all abbreviations with their first use in the manuscript.

3) please define phrases such as somatic hospital and dummy variable

4) please address syntax

Discretionary revisions - none
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.