Reviewer's report

Title: International benchmarking of specialty hospitals. A series of case studies on comprehensive cancer centers.

Version: 2 Date: 12 February 2010

Reviewer: Anneke Leijntje Francke

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Major Compulsory Revisions:
Although the paper is well-written, I wonder whether the methods are appropriate and whether the data are sound enough. For instance, regarding the literature review the authors do not provide any details about how they prevented selection bias (e.g. were the searches and inclusion process – partially or wholly – performed by two authors independently??), and whether and how the methodological qualities of the included papers were assessed.

Also the methods used in the case studies are not described in detail. For instance, were the centres compared indeed comparable, particularly regarding the background characteristics of the patients? How were differences methodologically taken into account?. And is the number of participating centres enough to speak about “best practices” and about “benchmarking”?

In addition, the information about the indicators used is very limited; were any numerators, denominators or norms formulated?. And if not, is it appropriate to use the term indicators”?

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