Reviewer’s report

Title: Data Linkage: A powerful research tool with potential problems

Version: 1 Date: 14 September 2010

Reviewer: Dan Berlowitz

Reviewer’s report:

The manuscript has been significantly improved and potentially makes an important contribution to the literature. There are a few revisions that are still necessary.

1) Carefully review Table 1 and the text for inconsistencies. For example, the text under Age states that there are 18 studies that examined the relationship yet only 17 are listed in the Table. The text stated 13 studies examined geography/site yet the Table lists 14. These obvious inconsistencies are very concerning for a second submission and raise concerns regarding the overall quality of the analysis. It would also be helpful if the reference numbers were included in Table 1.

2) I do not consider this a comprehensive review of the influence of data linkage on validity of results. Please add “suggests” to 1st paragraph of discussion “… data of quality linkage and suggests how it may influence…”

3) Clarify what is meant at the end of the 3rd paragraph that this is an exploratory discussion rather than a systematic review. The introduction and abstract does not frame this as an exploratory review.