Reviewer's report

Title: The Complexity of Assessing Differences between Public and Private Hospitals: Some Evidence from China

Version: 1 Date: 30 June 2009

Reviewer: gary eckstein

Reviewer's report:

You have written a very useful paper that confirms reports from other developing countries and supports numerous investigations of the private/public debate in developed countries. My comments below depend to some degree on the access you could obtain to detailed statistics from the hospitals concerned.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. The statistics presented are descriptive only. Simple analysis of significance between means can be added to the tables presented with comment in the text. The last paragraph under 'Quality Results' referring to multivariate analysis carried out by Eggleston et al (2009) begs the question on why your own paper contains no inferential statistical analysis.

2. I would have liked to see whether you found any substantial variation in data quality among the surveyed hospitals. Different ownership structures create incentives for selection of patients (where you make pertinent commentary) but also for presentation of data to authorities. Did you find any evidence of such practices or does Guangdong province assert mandatory controls over all hospitals irrespective?

3. In the last sentence of the first paragraph under 'Results' you say "Interestingly, government and for profit hospitals ..." but you do not say why this is interesting.

Discretionary Revisions

1. A few minor points of syntax you might want to check are 'wealthier parts of the China' where 'the' appears redundant; 'private for-profit hospitals have aggressive catered' should be 'aggressively'; 'Non government hospitals are primarily founded' and I think you mean 'funded'

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests