Reviewer's report

Title: Comparing public and private hospitals in China: evidence from Guangdong

Version: 2 Date: 25 October 2009

Reviewer: Girdhar Agarwal

Reviewer's report:

Reviewer's report on “The Complexity of Assessing Differences between Public and Private Hospitals: Some Evidence from China”

General comments:

The study tries to compare quality of care delivered by three types of hospitals in one specific area of China. The manuscript will be hard to understand without knowledge of structure of China’s health care system. The manuscript is hard to follow, particularly as the structure differs from the usual format for a research paper.

Specific comments:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The manuscript should be restructured in the accepted format for a research paper, ie introduction, aim, methods, results, discussion, conclusion. The statistical section should be separate and properly written. Presently, it is included in “Method” section and ambiguously written.

2. The sampling method seems to be arbitrary. The sample includes “all private for-profit hospitals, whereas stratified sampling is used for not-for-profit hospitals. The stratified sampling scheme used is not clear. The explanation is required for combining different sampling schemes, because these facts have to be taken into account in performing statistical analysis.

3. The model in equation (1), p.7, is not well defined. In this model factor N and F are dummy variables, which should be mentioned. The vector X of hospital and market characteristic is not properly defined, e.g. it includes ln(bed) as one of the variables. Why is logarithmic transformation used? The dependent variable Y is continuous or categorical. If it is categorical, then the regression will be logistic regression.

4. As measure of central tendency, for some variables, the means are used, whereas for some variables, the medians are used. Then these measures are not followed by appropriate dispersions (such as standard deviation or inter quartile range).
5. p.9, Para 1, a p-value <.000 is reported. It has no meaning.

6. For some outcome variables, only descriptive statistics are given. The comparison seems to be inconclusive without inferential statistics.

7. The section “Multivariate analysis of the correlates of hospital quality” should be more emphatic. The outcome variables and predictor variables should be clearly defined. The regression used will depend on the type of outcome variables. As I perceive, the outcome variables looks to be continuous, categorical as well as count variable. The regression models for each type of outcome variables are different.

In view of above comments, I can not recommend the publication in the present form.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest
Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published
Statistical review: I have done the statistical review.
Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.

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

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
I declare that I have no competing interests.