Reviewer's report

Title: Is hospital discharge administrative data an appropriate source of information for cancer registries purposes? Some insights from four Spanish Registries

Version: 3 Date: 10 July 2009

Reviewer: Ileana Baldi

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Minor Essential Revisions

Most of the comments have been resolved in a satisfactory way, except comment #2 and comment #5.

Comment #2

Assessing whether the hospitalization date (admission or discharge date may be chosen as the time reference) differs from the formal incidence date as defined by cancer registries (according to standard international rules in cancer registration) is an important point in case identification.

My question is: given that hospitalization tends to occur after diagnosis of an incident case, if an error in the date of diagnosis of at least one month (i.e. cancer registry cases diagnosed in December 1999 and appearing in the 2000 hospital discharge abstracts) is tolerated, by how much would the levels of sensitivity increase?

To this purpose I suggest a distinction of unrecognized prevalent cases by period:
- in the active search period:
  incidence in December 1999 and hospitalization in 2000
  incidence in January-November 1999 and hospitalization in 2000
  incidence before 1999
- incidence out of the active search period

Comment #5

I think that the reader would benefit from some background information on the wide variability in prostate cancer care due to the lack of a unified therapeutic approach. This would better explain the between-registries variability and the difficulty of tracking prostate cancer incidence on the basis of hospital discharge data alone.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
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