Reviewer’s report

Title: Statistical software applications used in health services research: analysis of published studies

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Reviewer: Hiromi Takahashi-Omoe

Reviewer’s report:

General Comment
This paper has analyzed a trend in statistical software usage in three journals related to health service research. The idea based on bibliometrics is unique and this line of approach would provide a certain amount of information for the researchers in the related field. However, I think the way this manuscript is structured and the data are presented needs to be radically revised.

Major Compulsory Revisions
The authors should address the methodological and analytical issues outlined below to improve its reliability. First of all, selection criteria for the three journals should be defined. It is difficult to give reasons why only the three journals are sufficient for a survey of health service research which is a highly interdisciplinary field. I strongly suggest the authors should survey additional journals.

The other drawback is that the manuscript compares the usage trends between the US and non-US countries, regardless of the fact that all three journals are published in the US. Additionally, the intent of a survey on differences between the two regions is not clearly demonstrated. In order to conduct an appropriate comparison between the regions and diminish regional bias, the authors should add journals published from European countries and so on.

Minor Essential Revisions
Methods:
1. ‘Leading journals’ described in Line 4 is not clear. The criteria should be defined scientifically.
2. I am wondering why papers based on meta-analysis were excluded, because such studies are usually based on a statistical approach.

Discussion:
   The reasons the authors gave are too general and provide insufficient material for discussion.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest
**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.