Reviewer's report

Title: Overcoming 'terra nullius' in the patient journey from acute care to rehabilitation

Version: 2 Date: 26 April 2011

Reviewer: Michael Rosemann

Reviewer's report:

This paper reports on patient flow analysis of patients in acute care within an Australian health care system. In particular, it studies the transfer from acute care into rehabilitation. Utilisation review data is presented and a number of issues representing inefficiencies are discussed.

The paper is overall well-written and there is no doubt that deeper analyses of patient flow management issues are required.

However, this submission suffers from a lack of a deeper analysis of the data and a more compelling cross tabulation of the data. There is a high degree of reporting on simplified averages leading to limited insights into the actual underlying root causes or specific contextual factors. There are very limited practical guidelines for how to overcome the current status. The paper itself states that previous work is largely confirmed.

Major compulsory revisions

I regard it as essential that the authors develop a desire for a much deeper investigation. It is suggested to build up expertise on root-cause analysis in order to identify the true factors that case the limited system efficiency and effectiveness. In a similar way different contextual data need to be distinguished in order to be able to explain differences in the system performance. The authors should reflect on their key contribution. Besides a more crisp research question, it needs to become more clear where the authors believe they extend the current body of knowledge. There are a number of redundancies in the paper.

Minor essential revisions

The paper is overall well written, but as indicated a number of redundancies could easily be deleted for a more consistent and better flow of the argument.

Discretionary revisions

The authors would benefit from a study of process analysis / improvement techniques (e.g. Six Sigma) as this will give their work a richer set of tools and techniques. It would also help the reader to include more benchmark data, ie what is actual the level of performance that can be expected?

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely
related research interests

**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.