Reviewer's report:

**Title:** Institutional Public Private Partnerships for Core Health Services: Evidence from Italy.

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 7 November 2010

**Reviewer:** ANDREW COULSON

This is a well written and well informed study of four health facilities in Venezia Region, Italy, which are governed by Public Private Partnerships. All were previously hospitals run by the Italian Sistema Sanitario Nazionale, and when these closed the facilities were handed over to partnership bodies, and new specialisms were found to continue their existence.

The limitations of the article is that it consists, in essence, of four case studies, which have particular features. So generalisation on the basis of these case studies can only be made with care. They are also at relatively early stages in their existences, so the conclusions about their effectiveness may change in times to come, e.g. if any of them get into financial difficulties.

But it is valuable to have case studies of partnership workings from Italy, and case studies which illustrate different ways of running health facilities.

My comments:

1. the article is somewhat long for what it covers, and there is some repetition. It would be more effective if the first half of the article was reduced by 20-30%.

2. the authors should not use the word "chapter" to describe parts of the article - the words "section" or "part" would be better (e.g. top of p.16).

3. in the first line of the abstract the phrase "have come to the attention" is unclear. It should be written as the single word "are".

4. the conclusions at the end of p.3 cannot be drawn from the evidence - to do so, the researchers would have also to study PPPs which are alternatives to the traditional public services provision.

5. the point at the end of the 2nd paragraph on p.4 about potentially exacerbating the differences between partners is not followed up subsequently.

6. p.7, bottom half. The fact that all the relevant organisations in a region were included in the study, does not alter the fact that there were only four organisations, nor does it ensure consistency.

7. more needs to be said at the top of p.12 about the origins of Case D.

8. p.22, 2nd paragraph. Is it perhaps premature to write of "PPP success" given the financial difficulties that appear to be emerging? Given the very wide critical literature about PPPs in general, and specific case studies, might it not be more prudent to qualify the conclusions, and write "apparent success" or " early years
success", or "success at the time of writing", or "success in developing new institutions". Otherwise, if any of these PPPs fail within, say, the next 4-5 years, the authors will look foolish.

**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.