Reviewer’s report

**Title:** Effect of in-home and community-based services on the functional status of elderly in the long-term care insurance system in Japan.

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 16 February 2012

**Reviewer:** Angel Otero

**Reviewer’s report:**

This article explains in great detail the mandatory social Long-Term Care Insurance System (LTCI) in JAPAN. This could be specially interesting for experts in other countries and cultures.

**Major Compulsory Revisions**

The main outcome used in this study is the so-called “disability transition status” (improve or decline) based on “periodic re-evaluation conducted by insurers to determine the eligibility level of beneficiaries based on their care needs”.

I think this a weak variable for this purpose, because it is not reproducible due to the peculiarity of LTCI organization, and because the criteria used by insurers in the periodic reevaluation is unclear. The own authors recognize that “disability transition as a measure of disability progression may not be specific enough to assess changes in functional status of LTCI recipients”.

In addition, I think the results in this study are insufficient to evaluate the appropriateness of Care Level 1 in LTCI and the authors’ suggestion that services evaluated “may be inappropriate in terms of intensity, duration or quality of care” is not enough sustained by the results shown here.

Finally it is surprising that the end of follow up was five years ago.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.