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: 2 Date: 4 May 2012

Reviewer: Gianfranco Damiani

Reviewer’s report:

The authors give a timely and almost exhaustive point to point reply to all the questions I posed. There is only one aspect they should still improve to publish a more valuable article.

In particular they wrote:

“…..According to your suggestion, the frequency of distribution of the intervention was calculated.

However, as you can see in the annex, a broad dispersion on the pattern of LTC services across strata is observed when LTC services are re-classified using the specific distribution proposed by the MHLW. Thus, the effect of the dispersion of services (just few cases by each category) strongly difficult any statistical analysis for the most of the services involved in the care of this cohort. We suppose that this effect, explain also the restricted results (only 3 over 7 services) of Tomita et al.

Then, facing this “structural” limitations-availability of a sample large enough to evaluate specific services- we conducted an analysis to examine the effect of in-home services ‘family” versus commuting services 'family” on the length-of-stay in CL1, along an observation period of 36-months. This categorization also permit to include subjects using 2 or more services under the same “family”. Undoubtedly, this aggregate approach involved a trade-off between specificity and reliability. We opted by reliability”.

I appreciated the above mentioned reasons and they should insert part of these considerations in the revised text and add their Annex as an Appendix to their paper. In fact, these explanations give clarification to the reader and more clearly elucidate the approach of the authors.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests