Reviewer's report

Title: P.Re.Val.E.: Outcome Research Program for the Evaluation of Health Care Quality in Lazio, Italy

Version: 1 Date: 30 June 2011

Reviewer: rino bellocco

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

Abstract:
Aims: authors state they want to describe the P.Re.Val.E. program, but they only concentrate on three of the indicators of the program,

Introduction
a) Order properly the aims (number five is repeated twice). I also suggest that these aims are not bulleted, but described in a sentence. These are not the aims of the paper, which are actually clearly stated in the beginning of the results sections.
b) Can the authors clear why direct standardization methods rather than indirect standardization methods were used for the comparative evaluation of outcomes. Is the assumption of lack of interaction being assessed?
c) The indicators were defined using information collected regional health information systems. Can the authors add on the completeness of such registries?

Methods
a) wait times on page 7 should be waiting times
b) Authors state that:
Acute events occurring during the index hospitalization, which could be complications of care/treatments,
Can they clarify this statement?
c) Conversion formula from OR to RR is highly questionable. Confidence intervals are too narrow, does produce bias if confounding is present. Another issue is the assumption of interaction of the OR scale and RR scale.
The authors need to justify this method carefully, unless they are willing to use other methods (see MacNutt, AEJ, 2003).
d) Authors refer to at http://www.epidemiologia.lazio.it/vislazio_en/metodi_statistici.php for the methodology used to select the reference group. Can they summarize in a few lines in the section?
e) Authors state that
For each indicator, trend analyses and comparisons of the 2006-2008 data versus the 2004-2006 data were developed for each hospital and area of residence.

But they did not specify in the previous section that they also have data for 2004-2006

Results

a) Table 1b. Health care facilities: reference group
Is not clear to me what this represents
Same for Table 2b and Table 4b

b) Table 2 is after Fig 1 and Fig 2 legend

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

Declaration of competing interests:
No to all