Reviewer’s report

Title: Elderly surgical patients and hospital bed occupancy

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Reviewer: Diane E. Holland

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Elderly surgical patients and hospital bed occupancy

This manuscript reports the results of a prospective, observational study designed to compare length of stay between patients under the care of one vascular and general surgical team, and to identify the number and causes of days of delayed discharge overall, by elective Vs. unplanned admissions, and by age groups.

This reviewer suggests the following to strengthen the manuscript:

Major Compulsory Revisions

This is written as a research study. If the data for the study were collected prospectively as the design indicates, explain why there was no need to obtain review of the protocol and approval of the collection and use of human subject data for research purposes. I am not perfectly comfortable with your explanation for bypassing institutional human subjects review, but will defer that concern to the editor. At the very least, institutional human subjects protection review adds a level of credibility to your work. More importantly, the scientific community remains very conscious of the importance of human subjects protection. Or perhaps this was an institutional quality improvement project, not research? This should be clarified beyond a comment that the data was readily accessible.

The relationship is between the hospital and the provision of care of elderly services is unclear. Are COTE referrals mandated by law or institutional policy?

It is unclear whether the COTE referral was sent late, responded to in an untimely fashion, or resulted in a delayed discharge due to lack of required community services.

The study confirms that issues identified in available literature related to delayed discharges persist, especially for unplanned admissions of elderly patients. Please provide in the Discussion section some practice and policy implications/recommendations from the results.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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