Reviewer's report

**Title:** The Resilience of Health Systems: A framework for assessment

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 9 April 2013

**Reviewer:** Ciaran O'Neill

**Reviewer's report:**

The paper presents information on aspects of the Irish health care system and how these evolved during the course of the financial crisis and subsequent economic downturn. It provides a context to these both in the form of broader economic data and qualitative remarks from a survey of stakeholders. It seeks to develop and deploy a framework around resilience through which this information can be interpreted.

The paper is written in a clear and what appears to be balanced manner.

The following points are offered by way of discretionary revisions:

Provide more conventional definitions of efficiency or relate those given more clearly to conventional definitions.

Provide comment on the usefulness of GDP or at least mention its limitations as a measure of income/output in an Irish context.

On page 13 provide a clearer rationale for the comment that increased spending on the HSE should be interpreted as some protection for frontline services.

On page 13 in respect to the discussion of medical cards (and as noted by the authors later) it might be worth mentioning here that attempts to limit medical cards to older persons were abandoned in the face of opposition.

On page 15 mention of the impact on performance of the loss of institutional knowledge may be worthwhile here. Again this is something picked up later on page 16 by one of the interviewees.

The authors may wish to caveat the use of some of their performance metrics on page 15 such as LoS. Indeed they may wish to state that - rather like Chou En Lai’s assessment of the French Revolution - its much too soon to tell what impact the crisis will have on the system.

It would be useful if the authors provided some explicit discussion around the representativeness of the documents reviewed, the statistics quoted and the informants interviewed.

**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