Reviewer's report

Title: The relationship between access to primary care and hospitalisations: Evidence from linked clinic and hospital data for remote Indigenous Australians

Version: 1 Date: 24 September 2013

Reviewer: Mark Griffin

Reviewer's report:

I was very pleased to read this report, and the new contributions that this report makes to this field. I congratulate the authors on their fine work.

Major Compulsory Revisions

A1) Figure 1 provides a strong rationale for why spline regression would provide significant improvements over quadratic regression for the aggregate data. However despite this in Figure 2 quadratic regression is used throughout. I would either (a) use spline regression in Figure 2, or (b) use quadratic regression but explain why quadratic regression had to be used within this Figure and what weaknesses might be present through the use of quadratic regression.

Minor Essential Revisions

B1) I am unfamiliar with "bubble diagrams". I would give a one-sentence explanation of these diagrams within the caption for this graph, and would cite a textbook discussing these diagrams within the main text.

B2) At the bottom of page 8 comments are made that percentages are shown in Figure 2, however the Figure shows PAH in person-year not percentages. Hence the discussion on percentages was confusing. I would quote PAH values within the main text (eg. such as 1.5 PAH per person-year for females at 0 clinic visits). In addition percentages could then be quoted within the main text if the corresponding PAH values were also given (eg. 1.5 PAH person-year which equates to 59% of the total PAH).

B3) I was unsure why there were no captions for the Figures.

B4) I found the line markings in Figure 2 hard to distinguish (eg. the dashed and dotted lines appeared almost identical to me). I would strongly recommend that line markings with a more visible distinction be used (again this is a comment on the visual appearance of the graph rather than the data itself).

Again I would congratulate the authors on the fine work in their report.

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:

I declare that I have no competing interests