Reviewer's report

Title: Does the perception of fairness and standard of care in the health system depend on the field of study? - Results of an empirical analysis

Version: 2 Date: 29 June 2013

Reviewer: stephen maluka

Reviewer's report:

General Comment
The paper is generally well-written and well-structured. It addresses an issue of great importance i.e fairness in priority setting and rationing. While the research question is well defined, there are some issues which need revision before the paper is considered for publication.

Major Compulsory Revisions
1. The background section is very thin. Only a few references are cited on the debate on priority setting in health care. This part could be strengthened by providing theoretical and empirical literature on priority setting. More important, it would be important for the authors to orientate the reader different approaches to priority setting grounded in different disciplines i.e law, political science, economics, medicine etc. There is huge literature on this aspect.

2. While I understand that the study aimed to understand subjective assessment of 'fairness', and "standard of care" it would be useful for the authors to provide their conceptualisation of the concept "fairness" and highlight attributes of fairness as being discussed in priority setting literature.

3. While it is beyond the scope of this paper, it would be important for the authors to expand the debate on fairness in priority setting, i.e how can a fair process for decision-making and priority setting be achieved? How can that fair process be assessed? What are the attributes of the fair process of priority setting and resources allocation in health care? How can other values like efficiency, equity, reasonableness, effectiveness etc be taken into account in priority setting? Should the focus be on the priority-setting process or outcomes of that process?

Minor Essential Revisions
The two concepts "priority setting" and "rationing" must be defined. Besides, it is not clear whether the authors have used these two concepts interchangeably or they have different meaning.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.