Reviewer’s report

Title: Improving accountability through alignment: the role of academic health science centres and networks in England

Version: 1 Date: 6 November 2013

Reviewer: Steven Wartman

Reviewer’s report:

1. Major Compulsory Revisions
The authors do a fine job of detailing, with insight, the major issues surrounding the formation of academic health centers and academic health science networks in the U.K. Their analysis is cogent and suggested "solutions" quite realistic given the nature of the constrained environment. However, the report fails to deal entirely with a critical component of success in this area: namely leadership. It is my experience that, regardless of the nature of written agreements, for the kind of "bridge" structures to work effectively that are described in this report, the right leadership must be in place. What are the characteristics of the leaders that are likely to bring these efforts to a successful conclusion? Were the leaders already in place, and, if so, why were they able to work well together? On the other hand, was new leadership required? I don't believe that the leadership issue is a tangential one; rather, it is often the "make or break" issue for these kind of complex organizational relationships. Some discussion along these lines would add greatly to the impact of the paper.

2. Minor Essential Revisions: none

3. Discretionary Revisions: none

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

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.