Reviewer's report

Title: A descriptive retrospective study of time consumption in home care services: how do employees use their working time? Use of geographic information systems for spatial analysis of home care services in two northern Norwegian municipalities.

Version: 1 Date: 30 May 2014

Reviewer: Anne Martin-Matthews

Reviewer's report:

1. Major Compulsory Revisions
The authors report fairly 'significant' ranges of variability in the driving time, in the visiting time, and in the time taken for other tasks (such as legally-required documentation) between Municipality A and B. However, no explanation is provided for the sources of these variations (e.g., visiting time variations of 44% - 62% in the same municipality). It would greatly strengthen the ms to have a more in-depth analysis of the sources of this variation. Given that the study collected data over a one week period in the month of December, it is (presumably) possible to determine - through repeated measures of travel by the same driver, or different drivers on the same route, or different workers/drivers visiting the same client -- any one (or combination) of these factors could account for such substantial fluctuation. In its retrospective, descriptive approach, this study is advancing understanding of a key issue in the delivery of home-based care services. More in-depth analyses of factors contributing to these wide variations would provide important contextual information to further elucidate the challenges in scheduling for home care, and implications for recipients of in-home care.

2. Discretionary Revisions
The second paragraph (p. 14) is phrased in a way that is highly 'speculative' and tentative, with the language of "may", "appears", "might". One hopes that the data allow for more 'conclusive' findings.

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'