Reviewer's report

Title: An analysis of patient house calls in the area of Attica, Greece

Version: 1 Date: 30 June 2006

Reviewer: Sarah B. Laditka

Reviewer's report:

General

This study provides a descriptive analysis of house calls provided by physicians in a medical company in Greece, over a recent 5 year period. The results suggest that house calls are provided more frequently to older people, and during hours in which most physician offices are not routinely open. The findings also describe the types of diagnoses treated. In sum, the study provides useful descriptive information about physician house call services. I offer several "discretionary" revisions and "minor essential" revisions for the authors to consider that would enhance the presentation.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

1. The authors should provide some motivation for their study period. That is, the authors should provide some reason for why they selected the 5 year time period; for example, this is the most recent data available.

2. Table 1: the authors should show the results for their bivariate analyses, the p-value, for each comparison group in the table, such as age, sex, period of the day, and so forth.

3. Figures 1, 2, and 3: In the results section, the authors should clearly and concisely describe the main findings for each of these figures.

4. I encourage the authors to continue to polish the language as they finalize the manuscript, and ensure that there are no grammatical errors. For example, in the last sentence of the 4th complete paragraph of the Introductory section, the first instance of "of" should be "for."

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1. It would be useful to describe trends in utilization over the 5 year period, that is, house calls per capita. This type of information would help to show whether the use of house calls provided by SOS physicians has changed over the period of the study, and may suggest changes in the frequency of use of physician house calls.

2. It would be helpful to comment on any major demographic changes in the population of Attica. Has the population grown? Have there been changes in the age distribution of population in this area, for example, is the population aging? This type of information helps to put the study in better context.

3. More information about characteristics of SOS physicians, particularly their specialty, would be useful. In this regard, I suggest that the 5th complete paragraph in the Discussion section, beginning with the sentence, "There are some characteristics â€¦" be moved to the final portion of the Introductory section. This material provides useful context for the study.

4. It would be useful for the authors to clarify why the annual data, shown in Figure 3, is not shown in Figures 1 and 2.
What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.