Reviewer's report

Title: The time course of subsequent hospitalizations and associated costs in survivors of an ischemic stroke in Canada

Version: 4 Date: 2 June 2006
Reviewer: Robert Kaplan

Reviewer's report:

General

This is a revision of a previously-submitted manuscript on subsequent hospitalizations and costs after an ischemic stroke.

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

1. The authors have provided several revisions which clarify the study design and results. One of points that has been clarified is that a relatively small percentage of study subjects were hospitalized for their stroke event (36%, see Table 1 and Abstract). This was not made clear in the initial version (the figure was only presented in Table without being noted in text). Thus, 64% were included on the basis of a physician visit that contained a diagnosis code for stroke in computerized databases. Throughout the manuscript, the authors describe their data using phrases such as "admissions following a stroke", "first six months following a stroke", "time since index stroke" etc. (eg, Tables 2-4 and Figure). If these were truly acute stroke events, one would expect the percentage hospitalized to be higher than 36%. Critical questions, then, include:

a) are stroke subjects included in this study generalizable to populations of acute stroke survivors?

b) is it accurate to characterize the followup period as time since stroke, as is done throughout the manuscript?

2. In previous studies that are referred to (refs 21, 22) as "comparable" investigations, design features were in place to ensure that events were in fact acute stroke, including neurologist validation, and applying minimum length-of-stay criteria. These features are lacking in the present study. This should be highlighted as a limitation of the present study.

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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)

none

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

none

What next?: Reject because scientifically unsound

Level of interest: An article of insufficient interest to warrant publication in a scientific/medical journal

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No
Declaration of competing interests:

I have no competing interests