Reviewer's report

Title: Learning from a Comparison of Apples and Oranges: A Retrospective Analysis of Health Systems in Denmark and Kaiser Permanente

Version: 2 Date: 8 July 2008

Reviewer: Sandra Leggat

Reviewer's report:

This is a well written paper, but in my opinion needs more justification for the choice of comparators.

Major Compulsory Revisions

There would seem to be little benefit in comparing an enrolled population with a geographic population in 2 different countries. This paper needs more discussion of why it was thought this type of comparison would be useful. Why were the six dimensions chosen? Were there other dimensions that would have been useful but not available? What was included in the health professional and physician groups? Is it possible to compare the utilisation rates reported with the prevalence of the corresponding diseases in the population? The discussion is written as if it was a surprise that the two populations would differ, which led to a relatively superficial discussion of the issues. I would think that it would be obvious that a self-selected enrolled population would be different from a geographic population and would have liked to see more detailed recommendations as to the data and analyses required to ensure an 'apples to apples' comparison across two very different populations.

Discretionary Revisions

I think it is a bold move to indicate differences in the quality of care when none of the indicators provided information on outcomes.

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