Reviewer’s report

Title: An Intervention Program to Reduce the Number of Hospitalizations of Elderly Patients in a Primary Care Clinic

Version: 2 Date: 25 September 2007

Reviewer: Gideon Caplan

Reviewer’s report:

General
This is an important study about an initiative to improve the health of older, chronically ill patients in one clinic. Given the multidimensional intervention, it can be difficult to write up as a paper for a medical journal. But not impossible. However, it seems that the authors struggled a little to get their study into the conventional format.

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

1. Statistics. A lot of data is presented. It is difficult to know whether many of the differences are significant, some obviously are. Given that there is all of this data, it would be worthwhile to do some simple statistical analysis. Many of the authors are linked to the university and should be able to obtain statistical advice there.

2. Although the article is focussed on reduction of hospitalization, the largest reduction, in dollar terms, is in the prolonged illness (nursing care) budget item. Could you please explain what this represents, and how it shrunk so much.

3. It is important in health service interventions to ensure that health outcomes are not adversely affected, and I am sure that with this intervention health would have improved. Is it possible with the Clalit database, or the Israeli government database to check mortality?

4. The methods section is too long, very messy and repetitive

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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. Introduction: talks about the per patient cost having “a negative tendency over the years.” Does this mean it was going up or down?


3. The clinic is decentralized in its management, do you mean responsible for its own management?

4. Baseline data: is this all for patients 65 years and older?

5. Definition of the problem: “a significant negative difference,” do you mean the
cost is higher at the study clinic?
6. Improvement of existing work processes. “A working program..” what does this mean?
7. What are intra-clinic referral forms?

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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