Reviewer's report

Title: Emergency hospital services utilization in Lleida (Spain): a cross-sectional study of immigrant and Spanish-born populations

Version: 1 Date: 15 December 2007

Reviewer: Pilar Guallar-Castillón

Reviewer's report:

This is a cross-sectional study conducted on 96916 visits to the emergency room of a public teaching hospital in Spain. The most important finding is that immigrants used the emergency hospital services more frequently than the Spanish born population.

The authors may take into account the following comments:

1. One important limitation of this analysis is the lack of information about the number of total residents for some groups (the denominator of the rates); specifically the number of immigrants with irregular legal status is not available, so the rates could be biased specially in those groups, and comparisons are not appropriate.

2. Another limitation of this paper is that sometimes the authors don't make the difference between admissions and patients. This point has to be checked throughout the paper. For example, because one older person could be hospitalized several times before dying, the unit for the mortality rates is per 100 visits, but not per 100 inpatients.

3. The authors have to give 95% confident intervals for the mortality rates.

4. How was the age introduced in the multivariate logistic regression models?

5. The Poisson regression gives rate ratios, not risk ratios. In addition, Poison regression was used to calculate both rate ratios and confidence intervals. Please modify this in the statistical analysis section.

6. We request the author to specify the labels in the axes of figure 1.

7. Unlike the authors say, this is a population-based study because the inhabitants (population of Lleida) were used to calculate the rates. EHS usage in private clinics is an additional problem. Spanish born population is more frequently prone to use private services than immigrant population, and so the comparisons between rates are not appropriate.

What next?: Reject because scientifically unsound
**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**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'