Reviewer's report

Title: Health care user satisfaction in South Africa

Version: 1 Date: 25 February 2009

Reviewer: Sally Donovan

Reviewer's report:

General comments
The article is generally clearly written and addresses relevant and important issues that will be of wide interest. Specifically, the article addresses matters of importance for South African healthcare, but they will also be of relevance to other healthcare settings, particularly where public healthcare structures are in development. The article is also topical in that it focuses on quality of care (and particularly how this is experienced differently by various socio-economic and ethnic groups) and comparisons between public and private provision. The importance of patients' perspective on the care they receive is increasingly being acknowledged in various healthcare systems.

1. Minor essential revisions

1.1. This is a secondary study, based on data from the 2003 World Health Survey in South Africa. As part of the WHO survey, this has strict design specifications and much of the methodology imposed by WHO, which makes further information available together with details of the survey instruments. However, the WHS specifies a minimum achieved sample of 5000 respondents, about twice the number quoted here for South African survey, and this requires some explanation – was this a subsample who were administered specific parts of the survey?

1.2. It would be very useful to have more information about levels of non-response and particularly differential non-response amongst specific groups. Otherwise, the survey methods and their implementation are adequately described.

Generally, the analyses and reporting appear to be appropriate, but there are areas where further clarification would be helpful:

1.3. The article states that logistic regression analyses were conducted on binary outcomes, but it is not clear that the results have been reported here. If they are not to be reported this should be stated.

1.4. Please could the criteria under which factor loadings are reported/omitted (table 4) be made explicit.

1.5. The conclusions state that healthcare satisfaction was lower than for a study of 16 OECD countries. Please could it be made clear whether the comparison is based on the same or equivalent survey items and analysed in the same ways.

1.6. It is also not clear why Brazil has been singled out for comparison and the
rationale should be given.

2. Discretionary Revisions

2.1. The article would benefit from a clear discussion of the dimensions of patient satisfaction. Named dimensions and components are referenced on p3, but there is no explanation of what these mean or how they were derived.

2.2. The findings about the main determinants of overall levels of satisfaction (Table 5) warrant a little more commentary (on the magnitude of the coefficients, and indeed comparison across the inpatient/outpatient settings).

2.3. There are a few places where the drafting could be improved, but this is not a major issue and should be picked up with a careful read through. Examples include: some inconsistency in the number of decimal points quoted; % sign missing in places; occasional repetition.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests