Reviewer's report

Title: The long-term care in Italy: an ecological study on the relationship between supply and health needs of elderly

Version: 1 Date: 30 May 2009

Reviewer: Roberto Bernabei

Reviewer's report:

- Major Compulsory Revisions

The manuscript is focused on Long Term Care (LTC) in Italy. As authors clearly state in the Introduction ‘LTC services can be classified in three groups: home care…, sheltered housing or old-age-homes… and nursing homes’. However in their manuscript they only analyse the availability of residential services (skilled nursing facilities and nursing homes) and home care services are not considered. It is possible that unbalanced needs (as assessed by dependency in ADL) may be compensated by higher availability of home care services in several regions.

The very low availability of residential services in southern Italy may also reflect some cultural and religious factors, and families in Southern Italy may be reluctant to institutionalize their disabled relatives and may want to keep them at home as long as possible. The only way to meet the needs of this population is thru home care services. For this reason, one again, I believe that a paper assessing LTC must include an evaluation of home care services.

Among ‘Health needs’ (page 7) authors include ‘Prevalence of disability: elderly people with at least one disability - difficulties in seeing, hearing, movement, function of activities of daily living (ADL) to total resident elderly population.’ Seeing, hearing, movement are not ADL and persons with an impairment in these areas but not in ADL can not considered disabled. Please, revised the definition of ‘disability’.

- Minor Essential Revisions

In the Introduction authors state that ‘…Activities of Daily Living (ADL) as transport, meals, occupational and empowerment activities…’. This is not correct since transport, meals preparation and occupational activities are not ADL.

The manuscript is really too long and it must be shortened (particularly the introduction)

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

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.