Reviewer's report

Title: Appropriateness of acute admission and in-patient stay for patients with long term neurological conditions

Version: 1 Date: 27 August 2008

Reviewer: paolo villari

Reviewer's report:

MAJOR COMPULSORY REVISIONS

The authors performed an epidemiological study to evaluate the inappropriateness of admissions/length of stays in patients with long term neurological disorders and to identify their possible determinants. The topic is an important one in health services research and it should be published. However, there are some major points that require adjustment and changes.

1) The authors calculated a priori a sample size of 350 patients, and they actually recruited 119 patients. The authors acknowledge that at the beginning of the Results section, and they say that the estimation of predictors of inappropriateness may be not precise. However it may be important to know why the calculated sample size was not achieved. Budget constraints? Did some patients refuse to participate? In the latter case it would be very important to perform a comparative evaluation of study participants and non-participants, in order to exclude a selection bias. Moreover, since the high probability to get a non-significant result concerning variables associated with inappropriateness, it would be informative to comment all (or quite all) the variables investigated, and not only those significantly associated.

2) Among the factors associated with inappropriate admissions, it is stated that “Whether a participant lived in their own home or a residential/nursing home was significantly associated with an inappropriate admission”. It is not clear if the variable associated with an increased probability of inappropriate admission is living in a residential/nursing home or living at home. Please make the sentence more clear.

3) Table 8 is not clear. Just to give an example, for patients living in a nursing home I read that the admission was appropriate in 22 patients and inappropriate in 3. Where do the associated percentages (22% and 3%, respectively) come from? Please, clarify the entire table.

MINOR REVISIONS

The format of the manuscript is quite strange. The first ten pages are in an horizontal format, while the last seven are in vertical. Please verify.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
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