Reviewer's report

Title: Impact of Hospital Mergers on Staff Job Satisfaction: A Quantitative Study

Version: 5 Date: 31 October 2014

Reviewer: Richard Pinder

Reviewer's report:

Dear Editor,

I was pleased to review the improved manuscript and thank the author for his amendments and responses to the points that I raised. The manuscript is certainly improved, although there are several issues that require revision before publication should be considered.

First and foremost, the quality of the English requires improvement and thorough revision by a native English speaker. There are frequent and repeated omissions of the definite and indefinite articles ('the' and 'a'). This detracts substantially from the quality of the work.

Secondly, the author(s) must be careful not to imply or over-state the findings. While I don't think the over-statement is intentional, there are occasions where the use of terms such as "significantly higher satisfaction" may be misconstrued (see itemised comments below).

I also include a few points or questions for clarification below.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Pinder
Imperial College London

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MAJOR COMPULSORY REVISION

1. Language is still unsuitable and lacks articles throughout.

MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISION

2. I agree with the statement on Page 15, line 18 that states mergers have a small and transient impact on satisfaction. However the rest of the paper implies a slightly larger effect size - I think this should be toned down: for example, page 14, line 4 "The significantly higher job satisfaction" - may be re-phrased "The statistically significant, yet small, increase in job satisfaction...". Such caveats are necessary throughout the manuscript before publication.

3. Page 5, line 4: The use of an RCT in this setting is impractical because it would be of no utility to randomise hospitals to mergers or not. The resource
intensity is not the limiting factor.

4. Page 6, line 25 et al.: I am not sure an international audience will understand what a hospital commissioner is. The term is unique to the English NHS and is likely to be interpreted differently elsewhere: the term may well be misconstrued as meaning the chief of the hospital (which it is not).

DISCRETIONARY REVISIONS

5. Page 3, line 30: Do you mean English NHS?
6. Page 5, line 26: Are you describing a specific anticipation effect (with a scientific / psychological definition) or just effects due to anticipation?

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: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I have acted, and continue to act, as an advisor to the UK Department of Health - the government ministry responsible for hospital care in England. I am employed by the National Health Service.

I have no other competing interests.