Reviewer's report

Title: Deaths from heart failure: Using coarsened exact matching to correct cause of death statistics

Version: 1 Date: 4 December 2009

Reviewer: Ardeshir Khosravi

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General comment:

The paper is a well developed research finding with a focused title. Findings show results of the methods to correct deaths from heart failure as a ill-defined cause in three countries. The conclusion and suggestions are thought to help improve reliability of mortality statistics and improve health policy recommendations. This paper could be published with minor changes.

Details comments:

1- In the Methods heading (page 4), the authors mentioned that underlying causes of death is selected typically using the automated coding system developed by the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics (line 24-26). This system is not used in many countries, particularly developing countries. Hence, it should be clarified that the two countries in study (except U.S) are used the automated coding system or not.

2- It seems that there are some mistakes to reference tables in the text, for instance, in page 7 (line 9) should be Table 3 and also in the title of table 3 (page 16) match variables are shown in Table 2 not in Table 1.

3- In page (10) it has been mentioned that 18% of recorded deaths were certified to heart failure in Egypt in 2007 (line 14), but reference for this estimation has not been mentioned.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests' below