Reviewer's report

Title: Income and Patient-Reported Outcomes (PROs) after Knee Arthroplasty

Version: 3 Date: 31 October 2012

Reviewer: Hassan Ghomrawi

Reviewer's report:

In their revision, the authors have acknowledged many of the limitations of the paper that have not been acknowledged in the original submission. However, they have not made any efforts to address these limitations despite the availability of data.

For example, they acknowledge that baseline functional status is collected but is missing on a significant number of patients. There has been no attempt to conduct any sensitivity analyses within this subset to determine if the results change, especially that with the inclusion of this variable, the only other study has found no effect of income.

Another example is the income categories and how these have different purchasing power in different states. This is the main variable of interest and its impact could change with adjustment. Although the authors state this as a limitation, the authors state in the discussion that “this does not affect the observed associations” (p 9, line 5). Again the authors do not attempt to address this limitation in any type of sensitivity analysis (by restricting their analysis to the Mid West) or for example by including the state or the census region as indicators in the analyses.

The current analysis that overcomes at least the first limitation (including baseline function) is the analysis of the change variable. In this analysis, there was no effect of income on outcomes and this should be the main conclusion of the study if the authors wish to make no further adjustments to their analyses. This main finding should be acknowledged in the summary and as well as the abstract.