Reviewer's report

Title: Does the introduction of an intermediate care hospital in a municipality influence health care utilization among elderly patients? A retrospective comparative cohort study

Version: 1 Date: 17 October 2014

Reviewer: Thomas Cartier

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions:
1) the paper should describe the activities in the studied general hospital, notably the existence of rehabilitation units. For instance, if there is a rehabilitation unit in the general hospital, one could easily imagine that elderly from ICHM are discharged to the ICH where they can get rehabilitation services from ambulatory physiotherapists, whereas elderly from CM stay in hospital in the rehabilitation unit; therefore, hospital stays for elderly from CM are longer than those for people from ICHM.

Minor Essential Revisions:
1) line 201: the sentence is not totally clear and we don't understand what authors mean by "used to allow for valid comparisons"
2) table 1: this level of detail in data is not useful at all and it would ease the lecture of this paper by showing either a figure instead or a less detailed table.

Discretionary Revisions:
1) the paper should have included data from the University hospital, since the relative rate of admissions in this hospital is quite different between ICHM and CM.
2) the discussion should have questioned more the transferability of the results of this study in other municipalities in Norway.
3) a more precise description of available primary care services in each municipality would have helped for understanding why ICH didn't influence their use.

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.