Reviewer’s report

Title: Establishment of radiation therapy services in North West Tasmania: A community need or election strategy?

Version: 0 Date: 01 Mar 2018

Reviewer: Timothy Showalter

Reviewer's report:

This study applies document analysis, a recognized method of qualitative research, to evaluate a policy decision to establish radiation therapy specialty care in an underserved area of Tasmania. The authors have framed the topic by providing the political context and have used document analysis to give perspective on the decision to establish radiation therapy services in this era.

To this reviewer, the topic and design have less overall impact on health services consideration than upon the political process in that specific nation. In its current form, I do not think that this analysis will have specific health services research impact or relevance, though it certainly would be interesting to citizens and lawmakers in Australia. Some potential alternative study designs that may have advanced this study to a more direct health services research topic would be to: compare the document analytic findings for this issue to other health service actions that were successful and/or were supported by the medical community for this underserved region; perform a companion analysis that compares the geographic needs for health care versus the distribution of services (in this case, the document analysis would provide insights into the mismatch); or include direct stakeholder interviews with health care personnel and politicians on a number of health service topics--which would establish a disconnect on this issue but not others, presumably? However, by narrowing in on this one topic without comparison to other services, districts, or nations, it seems to be mostly focused on the political messaging during campaigns.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
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No
Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
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