Author's response to reviews

Title: The strategic case for establishing public-private partnerships in cancer care

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Dear Reviewers and Editors:

Thank you so much for your thoughtful review of our manuscript and opportunity to address concerns. We were pleased to see the detail of the comments and guidance on how to address issues.

I have uploaded both a version with tracked changes (there are many) and a clean version since I find ones with a lot of tracked changes difficult to read. The 'clean' version also has corrected references since some have been changed/removed/added. When we first submitted this manuscript, it went to another journal, Health Care Management Review. The editor at that journal did not feel our paper fit with their journal and suggested we transfer the manuscript to you. We did so without making changes to the format. The requirements for your journal are not as constrained on page limits/word count as for the other journal so you reviewed a streamlined version of our paper that has now had more details added to address reviewer comments.

Overall, we noted that there were several comments about the fact that we did not cover limitations of our study as well as we could have. We have added quite a bit of details to the limitations in the Discussion section. We have also noted in several places throughout the article that our findings are based on only 10 hospitals and therefore no causation or attribution can be made.

Another frequent comment indicated that we could do a better job of setting up or introducing the problems our study attempt to address so we have almost completely reframed the background section in response to these comments, including adding definitions of terms (e.g., public-private partnership and strategic case) so that our points are clearer upfront.

Specific comments we addressed in addition to the above were:

1- “More needs to be said about the potential value of what is reported—two of
the dimensions did not show change which seems to be a key outcome (so explain further)”…or “what makes this analysis of importance to health services research and understanding of organizational innovation and change”

To address this comment, we have added more to the background to explain why understanding these partnerships is important and what the lessons learned are from our study. We have also expounded upon our conclusions so it is clearer to the reader how our findings can be used in future research or program implementation.

2- One reviewer noted the challenges in comparing these 10 hospitals since they were so very different in capacity from the start (i.e., “…one notable problem with ascertaining impact is the considerable variation among the centers on each factor. So the overall of averages on them are considerably misleading”—

To address this point, we have better explained our methods so it’s clearer that we are comparing each hospital to their own baseline capacity by using their percent change over time on each variable. We have also added in a section on some relevant characteristics of the selected hospitals at the time of the program’s initiation to help describe their differences upfront. We have also added this point as a limitation.

We believe we have addressed the comments and hope the reviewers are pleased with our responsiveness. Please let us know if additional details or responses are needed.