

Reviewer's report

Title: Development of a minimization instrument for allocation of a hospital-level performance improvement intervention to reduce waiting times in Ontario Emergency Departments.

Version: 1 **Date:** 27 February 2009

Reviewer: Martin Lee

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

The paper has an interesting premise in that they are attempting to identify stratification variables to employ in a future study of ED waiting times. I have several concerns about the methodology employed though.

- 1) The authors have attempted to develop a structured panel process that seems a bit convoluted and somewhat disjointed in its explanation. I need to understand why they did not rely on the Delphi or modified Delphi process, a very well-defined and cited method for performing the same exercise as they attempting here.
- 2) On page 8 of the paper, the authors indicate that highly correlated factors were excluded from consideration. "Highly correlated" was not well defined. How was correlation defined with an ordinal allocation factor?
- 3) As mentioned on page 10, there were missing responses in the first and second rounds. First, why should there have been a failure to respond from pre-chosen panelists, who presumably agreed to participate in the first place. How did the authors accommodate the missing responses? Were they concerned at all about non-response bias?
- 4) The final four minimization factors listed in Table 3 will need to be categorized in order to be used in this randomization methodology. How do the authors intend to do that?

Minor Essential Revisions

As the method of minimization is not well understood by many of the readers of this journal, it would be important for the authors to give at least a brief introduction to this methodology since it provides some of the rationale for the current paper.

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.