Reviewer's report

Title: Morbidity and doctor characteristics only partly explain the substantial healthcare expenditures of frequent attenders - A linkage study between patient data and reimbursements data -

Version: 1 Date: 23 July 2013

Reviewer: Tony Dowell

Reviewer's report:

This paper addresses an important topic, given the health expenditure incurred by frequent attenders in all OECD countries.

The introduction is clear with an appropriate review of relevant literature.

• It might be helpful to highlight the known association between frequent attenders and psychological factors.

The record linkage methodology is appropriate.

• Clarification is needed about the payment system in the Netherlands. Are all patients covered by insurance?

The study population is clearly defined, as is the definition of frequent attender.

• Would mental health prescription costs be included in somatic or psychological costs?

The selection of conditions for inclusion in the study is well defined and logical, though it might be argued that the overall frequency of attendance from all causes is more appropriate.

• Specialist care is not defined – is it referral to private specialist rooms, or outpatient costs in hospital care etc.

Given the variation in many countries on health care attendance and spending by ethnicity it is important the ethnicity of the population groups is included.

The statistical analyses and cost data are appropriate and sufficient to model the health care expenditure and its attribution.

Results.

There is a very good linkage between insurers database and the PCP patients. The frequent attender data is clearly displayed and described.

Discussion – the discussion is well laid out, and the strengths and limitations of the study are clearly described (and accurate).
The conclusions of the study are clear.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.