Reviewer's report

Title: Comparison of physician referral and insurance claims data-based risk prediction as approaches to identify patients for care management in primary care: an observational study

Version: 1 Date: 13 September 2013

Reviewer: Tom Love

Reviewer's report:

General

This is a well designed and executed piece of research with an interesting result, which will inform debate on the topical issue of case finding and use of predictive risk tools. It is one paper of a series based upon one study. The statistical methods are appropriate, applied effectively, and fully described.

The direct comparison between physician referred and statistically identified patient groups is methodologically strong, and well described.

There are some aspects of interpretation and discussion which the authors could tease out further. The authors have noted that physicians may have knowledge of patient social needs and factors linked to avoidable hospitalisations. This is probably true, but it would be good to expand upon this point, and to discuss any differences in factors of avoidability between PM and PCP patient groups (particularly in light of the high mortality in the PM group).

The authors conclude that PCP referral may be a complementary approach to PM identification of patients for case management. They might like to consider how they have framed this conclusion. Arguably, physician referral is the de facto baseline mechanism for access to case management in most health systems, and the health policy question is more whether PM is a useful or complementary approach to physician referral, rather than the other way around. This is important, because it bears on the question of what marginal gain PM systems have, and whether their performance exceeds unaided clinical decision making by enough to make their implementation cost effective and worthwhile.

There are no major compulsory revisions

There are no minor compulsory revisions

Discretionary revisions:

Authors may wish to consider the points about discussion and interpretation referred to above.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely
related research interests

**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