Reviewer's report

Title: Management of patients at risk for cardiovascular events: a national study of primary care physicians

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Reviewer: Janko Kersnik

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Management of patients at risk for cardiovascular events: a national study of primary care physicians

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
   The paper should be rewritten. I cannot agree on the authors’ statement, that they were studying practice patterns as they were studying physicians’ knowledge and attitude towards the study questions. Case vignettes are no longer regarded as a surrogate of physicians’ behavior. The article is in that respect misleading from the title on. The title and introduction should be rewritten in the direction of testing physicians’ knowledge and attitudes regarding the appropriate management of patients at CVD risk.

In the discussion part limitations of the approach should be discussed in deeper details.

Barriers are relatively vaguely handled in this paper. In the accessed materials table 5 is missing, so I cannot put a final judgment on this issue, but from the discussion, the barriers to follow guidelines are relatively “journalistically” approached. It is difficult to understand, how the price of the drug can be a motivation to prescribe it in the case when it is not indicated. This need some further clarification as the questionnaire on these items is not given.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
   The methods are more or less clear. The statement A case-based survey focused on cardiovascular disease risk management was distributed to a random sample of 12,000 U.S. family physicians and general internists between November and December 2006. needs explanation, was a random sample of 12,000 approached and the response rates of final sample given. As stated in the paper, leaves some uncertainty regarding the procedure.

It is difficult to judge the vignettes, because they are not provided, but there is some problem in using a “negative” case scenario and then use it in the analysis and discussion in the same direction as the pathologic cases. As the paper sides with the educational research in the methods section definitions of “appropriate” behavior should be stated for each case scenario.
3. Are the data sound?
Table 5 is missing.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
Yes.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
No. My observation is that some underlying expectations on a big difference between two groups of primary care physicians could not be demonstrated, as that would also be very difficult in using case scenarios on a publicly very “vocal” cases of CVD, when we can expect socially desirable answers from the participating physicians.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
Nothing form this plausible confounders is mentioned in the discussion part. From my point of view, besides small award also other possible limitations of this work should be stated.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
Not enough. They are explaining the reasons for the study, more or less replicating similar studies, but very little is said about previous research and findings of similar studies – they just list them, not stating the impact of the results on their decision to perform their study.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
The title is misleading. It promises an observational study of actual practice performance. The title and introduction should be rewritten in the direction of testing physicians’ knowledge and attitudes regarding the appropriate management of patients at CVD risk. Minor observation: There should be the direction of association referred in the abstract: Guideline nonadherence was directly related to years in practice and volume of patients seen.

9. Is the writing acceptable?
Yes.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a
statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'