Reviewer’s report

Title: The Estimated Economic Burden of Genital Herpes in the United States. An Analysis Using Two Costing Approaches

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Reviewer: Dr Dorothy Rice

Level of interest: A paper of limited interest

Advice on publication: Accept after revision, which I do not need to see

This is a well-written and interesting article that estimates the cost of genital herpes in the United States using two different costing approaches. The conclusions are supported by the data shown. I have a few (major) suggestions that might strengthen the paper:

1. The methods sections could be expanded in several areas:
   Page 4, last par.- The authors state that “average values from all respondents were considered.” What does that mean? The list of data collected in the paragraph above does not mention unit costs (shown in Table 1). Were they obtained from the North-East providers and were they imputed from resource utilization? Or was some other method used?

2. Page 4, last line- The authors state that “Indirect costs were calculated using the human capital approach.” They cite Drummond et al. and stop there. They should give more detail and explain how the indirect costs estimate was derived from the information on the proportion of patients unable to work. What wage rates were applied?

3. No information is given in either approach on how the data were extrapolated to the U.S. In the approach using expert interviews with 30 randomly selected primary and secondary care physicians in the North-East of the USA, were any regional adjustments?

4. Page 7, second full par. The same questions apply to the approach using claims database. How did the authors extrapolate from HMO and IPO data? They state that they extrapolated the collected data to the US population; how did they do this? What data were used? Were any adjustments made?

5. Page 7, second full par. Some numbers are shown, but I don’t see them in the tables: 31,130 symptomatic GH cases, the total of 806,310, and the crude prevalence of 2.89 cases per 1,000.

6. Table 2 shows the total costs; shouldn’t the last 3 digits be dropped and the costs shown in thousands? Showing the costs in such detail gives it an appearance of preciseness that isn’t
warranted. In addition, can confidence intervals be calculated and shown?

7. Table 3, last column (percent of total) should show decimal points, not commas.

8. Table 4, headings should be aligned with the columns.

9. Table 8. A total line should be shown and the last column should be rounded to thousands.

**Competing interests:**

None declared.