Reviewer's report

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

Authors:
Thomas D Szucs (TSzucs@compuserve.com)
Karin Berger (TSzucs@compuserve.com)
David N Fisman (dfisman@caregroup.harvard.edu)
Stephan Harbarth (harbarth@tch.harvard.edu)

Version: 2 Date: 13 Jun 2001

Reviewer: Ken Smith

Level of interest: A paper whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

The paper addresses a question of some importance: what is the economic burden of genital herpes, a relatively common illness, in the US. The conclusions drawn are adequately supported by the data presented, and sufficient details about data acquisition and analysis are given to allow replication of the work. The paper is well written overall.

Comments

1. The sources of cost values used in the expert interview costing approach (page 4, last para and Table 1) are not clear and should be made explicit. The costs do seem within a reasonable range.

2. Along the same lines, calculation of indirect costs should be further clarified (page 4, last sentence and Table 1). Did the authors use the US average hourly wage or some other method? The reference cited for the human capital approach does not appear to mention this method - another reference should be used.

3. The claims database approach uses direct medical costs and a third party payer perspective. The mention of indirect costs (first sentence on page 6) should be omitted.

4. The reported duration of primary and recurrent genital herpes episodes (last sentence, page 6) are somewhat longer than those commonly cited in the literature, particularly those treated with antiviral agents. The effect of this on the total cost figures should be mentioned in the discussion.

Competing interests:

None declared.