Reviewer's report

Title: Cost of Illness for Cholera in a High Risk Urban Area in Bangladesh: An Analysis from the Household Perspective

Version: 1 Date: 7 July 2013

Reviewer: Luis Roman Carrasco

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OVERALL EVALUATION
This a concise article that estimates the average cost of cholera episodes in an urban setting in Bangladesh. The article is well written and very clear and the sample size is considerable. I have however some concerns that I think could improve the paper and I describe in detail below.

Major Compulsory Revisions

GENERAL COMMENTS
1. My main concern is that only those patients that got hospitalized (and hence confirmed) were selected for the study. This creates a bias towards the most severe cases that should be made clear in the manuscript, especially in the abstracts, methods and discussion when the estimate is compared with previous rural estimates that are considerably lower ($12 vs. $30).

2. Looking at the tables, the standard deviation is many times an order of magnitude higher than the average. I think this way to present the data is not informative as the distribution seems to have a long fat tail (some cases are very expensive and others very cheap). I suggest that the median, 5th and 95th percentiles are added to the tables. This will depict better the distribution of the cost.

3. The paper will be much stronger if some epidemic data were presented as well. It would be good to know the statistics of the length of stay for instance (median and percentiles), proportion of cases that had complications or proportion of cases that underwent certain treatment. This will give the reader an idea of the distribution of severity and the subsequent distribution of costs.

4. Expenditure on food is factored in as a cost due to cholera but I suppose that such a cost would be incurred even if the person had no cholera. It would be good to explain the rationale for its inclusion.

5. Are the costs incurred by people visiting the patient to the hospital accounted for?

6. The study was conducted in an area where vaccines were being rolled out. Some information on the vaccine coverage and whether some patients had been vaccinated would be interesting.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS
7. Please insert line numbers in the document. It is hard to refer the comments.
8. When stating a cost, I am used to see the “US$” ahead of the cost, not after. Please consider updating this. E.g. in second line of the “findings” paragraph in the abstract: “7.4 US$” replace by “US$ 7.4”.
9. First line of findings: “estimated to be” instead of “estimated to cost”.
10. First line of Background: “Cholera presents a substantial” instead of “Cholera is a substantial”.
11. Please spell out COI.
12. Second paragraph is background. Provide reference for studies in Beira, Kolkata…
13. Last line of second paragraph of background: “health policy making” instead of “making health policy”.
14. Please spell out icddr,b’s. If an acronym, shouldn’t it be capitalized?
15. Since it is the core method, please provide an English version of the questionnaire utilized. That could go in supporting information.
16. In several instances there is not space between a work and the reference number, please insert those.
17. Please specify how you quantify the contribution of children to the household. I think I didn’t understand well, are there standard salaries for children?
18. Please provide a reference for the assumption that half of the wage is applied to unpaid home workers.
19. In second paragraph of “Measuring household costs of cholera” (please do not capitalize cholera) please specify what age groups you have allocated one half and three-quarters (note instead of three-fourth) of the wage.
20. First line of “Data analysis”: “data were” instead of “data was”.
21. Second paragraph in “Data analysis”: “assumptions” instead of “assumption” unless you specify what specific assumption you refer to. In the last line, “as in an earlier study” instead of “as earlier study”.
22. Please use the same number of decimal places throughout the article. E.g. inconsistency in the first paragraph of the discussion.
23. In the second paragraph of the discussion. It is stated that the health seeking behavior of adults and children differ (children go to private practitioners). Are there data to support this finding? In the same paragraph: “inject saline solution” instead of “inject saline”.
24. Last paragraph in discussion: “data have” instead of “data has”. “to minimize the bias” instead of “for minimizing the biasness”.
25. In conclusions is the first reference to case duration, please provide the data.
26. In tables 3 and 5: “indirect” instead of “in-direct”.
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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

Declaration of competing interests:

I don't have any competing interests to declare.