Reviewer's report

Title: Measuring the Costs of Outreach Motivational Interviewing for Smoking-Cessation and Relapse-Prevention Among Low-Income Pregnant Women

Version: 4 Date: 5 May 2009
Reviewer: Brian Flynn

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Major Revisions

1. The scope of the paper should be defined and presented more clearly. The focus is simply on a method of estimating costs of delivering a behavioral intervention to a defined panel of participants. The paper should briefly review the more general framework of cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analyses and more directly explain that the costing procedure demonstrated would be one step in a broader analysis. For the benefit of typical readers, the introduction should clearly distinguish between the procedure presented and the cost-effectiveness analyses more commonly encountered in the clinical research literature.

2. The discussion should come back to this point, clearly explaining that the estimates derived by the costing procedure are simply for delivery of the intervention to the designated participants and do not incorporate consideration of intervention effect; it should be made clear that the result reported is not an estimate of cost per quit.

3. The paper should more clearly and thoroughly explain the differences between the demonstrated costing procedure and alternative approaches. What is the unique information that justifies publication? Perhaps background information and the rationale used by the national panel in recommending this cost procedure could be presented in more detail.

4. Reference to “gross-costing of clinical events prevented” (p.6) is confusing and probably inappropriate; if necessary, this could be presented as part of the more general framework noted in point 1.

5. An entire paragraph on p.10 is devoted to the cost saving side of a comprehensive analysis, yet this is not in the scope of the current paper.

6. Similarly, an entire paragraph on p.13 addresses hypothetical cost savings resulting from smoking cessation; this issue is not in the scope of the current paper.

7. There is a gap between the costs considered in this paper and the costs that might be incurred if a similar intervention were to be implemented in a typical clinical situation. This paper focuses on costs of intervention delivery to a group
of women who consented to participate in a research study. Recruitment costs would be incurred in a clinical situation. The resulting set of participants likely would not be as committed to the intervention program resulting in higher scheduling costs, such as reduced availability and missed appointments. This issue would certainly affect the main estimate as well as the scaling example presented on p. 15. Although the focus is on the costing procedure and not the specific example, these issues should be acknowledged as limitations in the discussion.

Minor Revisions

1. The detailed background information on motivational interviewing is not necessary, and possibly misleading since the details are largely irrelevant to the example illustrated in methods and results.

2. Footnote Table 2 to explain “TC”.

Other Comments

1. Examples of the process tracking form and other worksheets would help to clarify the presentation.

2. The discussion of micro-costing strengths and weaknesses is valuable and could be extended. This is where the case can be made for investing resources in this procedure. A single packed paragraph may not be adequate.

3. The abstract and introduction sections focus on the importance of economic analyses of smoking cessation interventions. Are there examples of alternative intervention costing procedures in the smoking cessation literature to which the micro-costing procedure might be compared?

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**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.