Reviewer's report

Title: Who pays and who benefits: How different models of shared responsibilities between formal and informal carers influence projections of costs of dementia management in Australia.

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Reviewer: Paul Clarkson

Reviewer's report:

This paper outlines a study of the cost projections of dementia care between formal and informal sources of support. The argument is well constructed and the analysis is exemplary.

I have a few minor points to make:

Discretionary Revisions

The assumption that once in institutional care, in a nursing home for example, costs are fixed can be challenged. These patients would still receive out patient appointments, contact with general practitioners etc., and there are emerging studies into liaison services with nursing homes which suggest that such costs would vary by location, depending on whether a district had developed such a liaison service or not. Such costs would also vary at an individual level. However, perhaps the words ‘relatively’ fixed are important here; the paper mentions this point as an assumption but perhaps it can be said that this is just one limitation of the model proposed. It is a relatively minor point but perhaps the authors can make mention of it?

It would probably be good just to state some of the interventions that could potentially delay progression or onset by way of description. Without these the reader is left with a systematic analysis but without anything to pin it on; much relies on the reader’s knowledge of the original paper that outlines the simulation model. Just a few lines description (in a box for example) would add to the paper.

Of course, costs of formal care are not always costs to the same agency, e.g. costs of home care may be attributed more to the local municipality or authority rather than the health department. So, in presenting formal care costs (to government?) it must be stated that there may be a differential contribution from health and social services budgets; this may be important for policymakers to consider and may be important to state in the paper. ‘Who pays?’ may be not just ‘formal’ services but health, social services or the voluntary sector (currently a big issue in countries like England). The relative mix and contribution of each is important to acknowledge: there may be different constituents and perspectives for Federal and State governments for example as a different basis for decision making arises in terms of funding for long term care. A response to these cost projections will also necessitate different considerations depending on ‘who pays;
if home support agencies are the primary responsibility of the voluntary sector for example then the response will be a call for greater funding from the State government. These considerations have implications when the model presented is interpreted by readers in different countries who will be more aware of the relative mix of formal resources in their country. So, it is a question of taking supply factors into account in the interpretation. I’m not suggesting the authors should re-calculate their whole model but some acknowledgement of the fine grained detail that would need exploring would be useful in the discussion.

**Level of interest:** An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests