Reviewer's report

Title: A systematic review of economic evaluations of interventions to tackle cardiovascular disease in low- and middle-income countries

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Reviewer: David McDaid

Reviewer's report:

This is a well written review on developments in the economic literature and as such is a useful contribution to synthesising what is known about actions against cardiovascular disease in low and middle income countries.

My general comments are modest. The paper could in some places be a bit tighter - I felt at times in the discussion and the conclusion that there was a tendency to shift towards a general discussion of the limitations of economic evaluation, which while of interest, perhaps did not appear to be as closely linked to the focus of the paper as they could be.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Poland is classified as a high income country by the World Bank so I was surprised to see it in the search strategy. Perhaps this is a recent change in its classification? But in any case the paper from Poland really should be removed from the analysis, and all the tables and text modified accordingly.

In the discussion section – the comments re the Choosing the Right Model citing in detail the work of Unal seem a little bit out of place – and could be written in any review of economic evaluations. The authors need to ensure that they make a connection with the studies in this analysis – what can be said about the 18 studies with models in the paper?

Minor Essential Revisions

In Annex III it would be helpful to split the table of studies into two – one for modelling studies and one for empirical studies.

In the tables it is important if possible to provide a little bit more information on the type of modelling approach used and certainly the duration of time period used in models.

It would also be helpful to clarify the primary source of effectiveness data for models for each individual study – domestic, other low/middle income country or high income country.

For empirical studies it is also important to state the duration of the empirical study and length of follow up. This also helps the reader judge whether discounting was indeed appropriate or not.
For the table it is important to state the size of population samples in intervention and control groups for empirical studies.

Can you clarify in the text whether any price years have been standardised. I dont think so but it is helpful to clarify.

- Discretionary Revisions

In terms of limitations, the authors might want to consider the capacity for undertaking economic evaluations in low and middle income countries. Just what scope is there for health economists?

Re this capacity issue – it might be interesting to note the proportion of authors on these papers who are based in the countries of study.

Is it a significant limitation not to be able to look at Chinese bibliographic databases? Is there an emergence of Chinese economic evaluations and Chinese research? Might the analysis be somewhat different if Chinese language journals, many of which are not abstracted in English, could have been searched.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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