Reviewer's report

Title: Medical Expenditures Associated with Nonfatal Occupational Injuries among Immigrant and U.S.-born Workers

Version: 2 Date: 21 March 2012

Reviewer: John D Meyer

Reviewer's report:

The authors have made considerable efforts in revising the manuscript according to the earlier critiques. The article is much clearer now in both its objectives and its findings. In particular, the main criticism made earlier, that the original article reflected only contrasts between injured workers without considering the populations from which they were drawn, has been addressed by the inclusion of denominator data on the US- and foreign-born populations. This has improved the comparability of the injury cost data and reduced concerns about bias and non-comparability of the data on the two sets of injured workers.

I have only a couple of concerns, in areas that were introduced into the new manuscript, that I would like the authors to address before publication:

Major Compulsory Revisions:

1. The inclusion of injury data suggests that many of the subjects (9-12%) sustained more than one injury during the period of study. Since repeat injury would differentially affect treatment, and treatment costs, I might suggest (if the authors have not already done) analyses for Tables 2 and 4 that consider injuries as nested within individuals, so that repeat injuries to the same subject are not treated as independent. This would entail use of generalized estimating equations (GEE), accounting for repeat injury in individual subjects, and can be easily done in SAS. The results may not differ much from the present ones, but results from GEE or other programs that analyze potentially correlated intra-individual outcomes would be more defensible.

2. A finding that the authors should comment upon is the marked difference in payment by “Other Sources” evident in Table 3. This difference is roughly equivalent to the gap between US-born and immigrant workers in payment by workers’ comp + private insurance. Since the gap in out-of-pocket expense is by comparison quite small, this implies that governmental sources (federal, state, or local) are picking up nearly one-quarter of the bill for injured immigrant workers. If accurate, this represents a major cost-shift to public sources. Although the reasons for this probably cannot be deduced from the data, it would be useful to see comment and a brief review of this phenomenon. Potential explanations may include lack of insurance, lack of WC coverage by companies employing immigrants, or contested claims – whatever the reasons, it is striking in its suggestion of an increased cost burden to governmental payers for injured
immigrant workers.

Discretionary Revisions:
In the Tables, numbers in the millions, billions and trillions could be usefully truncated, and commas added for ease of reading -- for example, instead of “N: 129077536” the Table might read: “N (1000’s): 129,077”

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**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.