Reviewer's report

Title: Private costs and uptake of screening for abdominal aortic aneurysm in a remote rural area

Version: 1 Date: 21 November 2005

Reviewer: Hilary Ashton

Reviewer's report:

General
1. Question posed was interesting and relevant.
2. Results did not specifically link uptake and private costs.

Compulsory changes

Abstract
1. The methods paragraph made no mention of collecting information about travel costs although this was collected
2. The results section was not specific enough and did not link uptake with private costs. The results section would benefit from including more detail.

Methods
1. Para 1 The use “etc” should not be included. Exclusion criteria should be stated in full or reference to where these are found
2. Some reference should be made about non-attendees. Information is available on age. How far they would need to travel could be calculated based on address postcodes.

Results / Tables
1. Table 2 should include numbers and %. No cell should be blank. Add “0” or “not applicable”.
2. Mode of transport. Why is distance limited to car users? This needs to be justified as potential distance using postcode can be calculated for those walking or using public transport and may provide some additional useful data.
3. Has any attempt been made to address confounding factors on uptake e.g. age, coming from a deprived district, time/season of appointment? If not, I think this should be stated.
4. In the discussion Para 1, differences between settlement types and costs are referred to but statistical comparisons are not included in the results section. They also conclude that that the impact of geographical location was reduced by the outreach approach. I congratulate them on their high uptake, but it would have been interesting to see the actual statistical relationship between cost and distance travelled.

Discussion
1. Para 4 Sentence says “… as indicated by the wider confidence limit for this group” I agree with the principle but IQRs are quoted, not confidence intervals.
2. The authors need to discuss the whether their findings can be applied to other rural areas and what the limitations are likely to be.

Conclusion
Needs to be reworded to link remoteness, high uptake and costs. Despite the remoteness… high levels of uptake were achieved and costs were minimised”.

Minor essential changes
1. Background Para 2 Hyphenation of “out-of-pocket”
2. Discussion Para 1 Need % for Denmark (?typo)
3. Table 3 “Total” is not meaningful. Replace it with “All areas” or similar.

Discretionary revisions

Background
1. Para 1 Overall mortality rate for ruptured AAA is usually estimated at 80-90%. Are death rates from breast and cancer really comparable to this?
2. Para 2 Is “opportunity cost of time” a well-known expression amongst those who would read this article?
3. Para 5 The authors quote a Swedish paper that shows “uptake is typically lower in rural areas”. I think this is questionable for the UK as uptake for health interventions in inner cities is often lower because of a mobile population, minority ethnic groups, deprivation etc. I suggest that the statement needs clarification.

Methods
Para 5 Is “opportunity foregone cost” a well-known expression amongst those who would read this article?

Results
1. 1. Para 2 “Men in remote areas were most likely to travel by car” Strictly, Chi square does not confirm direction of statistical difference, only group differences. Perhaps using Chi Square for trends would be more appropriate.

Discussion
1. Para 5 The authors mention another paper’s results about non-attendees. However, as no analysis was done on this group I think this is irrelevant to this paper.
2. Para 6 Sounds like a literature review without relating to current study! Suggest some revisions.

References
35 seem excessive for this type/length of paper. Can they be reduced and more focussed?

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interest in this paper.