Reviewer’s report

Title: Patterns and Determinants of COPD-related Healthcare Utilization by Severity of Airway Obstruction in Korea

Version: 2 Date: 1 July 2013

Reviewer: Kozui Kida

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In this study, the authors have described the identification of determinants of healthcare utilization by patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) based on combined data from the 4th Korea National Health and Nutritional Survey (KNHANES) and Korean National Health Insurance. They concluded that utilization of COPD-related healthcare services increased with factors such as disease severity, advanced age, and co-morbidities.

The number of patients with COPD is increasing worldwide and is posing becoming a heavy burden for the society; therefore, this study is of great importance. However, the manuscript is poorly written, and is therefore not suitable for publication in BioMed Central as an original article.

Major comments:

1. The medical insurance system in Korea may differ from those in other countries, which may profoundly affect healthcare utilization; however, the authors have not provided sufficient information, and it is difficult to understand “how the burden to society”.

2. The authors have identified the determinants for healthcare utilization in patients with COPD; however, a large amount of similar data has been published previously. This study is not novel, which is a major shortcoming of this manuscript.

3. Only 879 cases with obstructive airflow obstruction were analysed; this may also include cases with bronchial asthma. The authors did not segregate patients with COPD from those with asthma; this is another shortcoming of the study design.

4. The authors should add data of non-pharmacological interventions, which are a major concern to the society, and pharmacological interventions. Data of healthcare utilization by patients with acute exacerbations is also important, since most of the healthcare utilization comprises management of acute exacerbations.

Minor comments:

Omitted.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest
Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

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.