Reviewer's report

Title: Economic Burden of Asthma: A Systematic Review

Version: 4 Date: 24 December 2008

Reviewer: Felix Ram

Reviewer's report:

General comment:
The authors have done well to address this area of research. However, there are some outstanding queries that require attention. It is a well presented manuscript nevertheless it could be made succinct in places.

Major compulsory revision:
Authors state that due to heterogeneity in cost analysis across studies they did not report this data. Why wasn't the three different types of studies not analysed separately or as subgroups. What attempts were made to deal with the heterogeneity. It would be more interesting for the reader to look at these original results and see how the authors attempted to deal with them than for the authors to have completely change the analysis to an easier option (by reporting percentages of studies and costs). It is difficult to see how the conclusions derived here are supported by the "relative" results presented.

The authors have decided to report the findings of the systematic review in relative terms and not mention the exact costs but rather percentages. Both figures should be included and a table should be included listing all such details for the outcomes listed.

The outcomes listed should provide mean and SD or SEM measurements and the remainder of the details in the table mentioned above (e.g. heterogeneity, weighting, p values, analysis type, etc).

Minor essential revision
Abstract states that searchers were done from 1966 to 2008, but page three states from 1990 to 2008 - please revise.

Please justify/explain the exclusion of non-english articles.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests