Reviewers report

Title: The Relationship between Body System-Based Chronic Conditions and Dental Utilization for Medicaid-Enrolled Children: A Retrospective Cohort Study

Version: 2 Date: 24 April 2012

Reviewer: Sandra L Decker

Reviewers report:

I think the change from odds ratios to relative risk ratios has greatly improved the paper. (I continue to believe that marginal effects would have been better, however. I think if you look at my examples in my previous review you will see that marginal effects provide a particularly meaningful way to consider the magnitude of effects not only relatively, but also absolutely.) However, RRRs are a big improvement over ORs. Most of your RRRs are not that far from one, though.

I continue to believe that previous preventive care use probably should not have been included in the model and don’t think a reference to previous literature is very convincing. But it probably depends on your goal. If you are including some covariates – e.g. whether the child has at least one Medicaid-enrolled sibling – since you think those variables can be targeted – then you should probably exclude the preventive care variable. If you found that children with another Medicaid sibling were significantly and strongly more (or less) likely to receive dental care, then assumedly the policy implication would be that you would particularly want to target children without (with) Medicaid-enrolled children for outreach. But having a Medicaid-enrolled sibling is also likely a predictor of preventive care use and so the preventive care use variable is likely to “take out” some of the effect of the sibling variable. Unless you are arguing that you can target children with more or less preventive care, and you truly just want to know the marginal effect of sibling after controlling for preventive care use? I tend to think for policy purposes (which I assume is the point of the article) that you would be better off without the preventive care variable in.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

No conflicts of interests