Reviewer's report

Title: Comparison of Outpatient Health Care Utilization among Returning Women and Men Veterans from Afghanistan and Iraq

Version: 3 Date: 18 May 2010

Reviewer: Matthew Maciejewski

Reviewer's report:

The authors were very responsive to the prior reviews, including making major changes to the table to align the unadjusted and adjusted results that is hopefully more informative for the reader. In particular, the tables highlight that even though there are no differences in race or marital status between female and male non-users, there ARE significant race and marital status differences between female and male users. It is also very helpful to see the variation in the length of observation time, because this interesting paper is really an early snapshot of VA experience of this cohort. VA use (yes/no) and amount of use may change greatly in the coming years, so this baseline (essentially one year) assessment will provide a very useful contrast for multi-year comparisons in the future.

Also appreciate that the implications were toned down and contribution made clearer. Very nice paper.

Major Compulsory Revisions: None.

Minor Essential Revisions

1) Page 8 discussion of Table 3: The authors should state that "Women health care users were more likely than men health care users to be younger, single, ..." The sentence currently reads: "Women were more likely than men...." The addition of "users" or "health care users" will clarify for the reader that Table 3 is conditioned on being a user of VA health care.

2) Since the authors took the time and care to assess use separately from intensity of use among users, I would recommend modifying the interpretation of results in the abstract, the discussion section, and the conclusion section. The current paper says that "women veterans had higher overall utilization", which might be misinterpreted by readers as more visits. However, that isn't the case. I would recommend instead saying that "women veterans were more likely to seek VA care than men veterans, but the intensity of use was similar between women and men users of VA care" or something along those lines. That is more consistent with the results.

Discretionary Revisions: None.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I am a VA HSR&D researcher as are most of the authors. No other competing interests to declare.