Reviewer's report

Title: The Importance of Examining Movements within the US Health Care System: Sequential Logit Modeling

Version: 2 Date: 16 July 2010

Reviewer: R Kimerling

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The clarity of the manuscript is greatly improved in this revision.
There is one major critique and several minor issues:

1. The introduction and discussion center on a model of specialty care utilization that is nested within primary care utilization, and that in the sequential movements discussed, utilization of primary care always precedes utilization of specialty care. However, the data in this paper to not correspond closely to the model that is proposed to be tested: any care is substituted for primary care; perceived need does not correspond to patient perceptions; and cross sectional, non-nested items are used to model sequential processes. In addition, data is not obtained from members of a single health care system or plan, where the path to specialty care is known or uniform across patients.

Correspondingly, the language of the paper (especially in the abstract and introduction) should be softened considerably to note that this paper is a preliminary example of examining specialty care using this sequential framework, in an effort to make the literature review better correspond to the data and results of the paper. For example, the first sentence of the abstract should suggest utilization of specialty care "may not be" a discrete behavior, etc.

2. Perceived need tends to be defined in terms of patient perceptions. In this study, perceived need is defined in terms of the patient or the provider's perceptions of the patient's need, which is substantially different. This variable should probably be called something other than perceived need, since it taps a different construct. This may also be a reason why results for this variable contrast to those of previous work.

3. The research questions at the top of page 6 are not clearly stated. In the second question, the phrase "general health care services" should be replaced with "any health care services" since general health care services were not measured in this study.

4. On page 11, if the odds ratios presented are actually adjusted odds ratios (which they seem to be) then AOR should be used instead of OR.

5. In the limitations paragraph on page 16, the statement about conditional probabilities mitigating the lack of specificity in dependent variable
"any health services" is not clear.