Reviewer's report

Title: How protective is cervical cancer screening against cervical cancer mortality in developing countries? The Colombian case.

Version: 3 Date: 5 May 2010

Reviewer: Nancy Breen

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

The authors purpose is clearer in this revised version than in the original: the UCC screening program, in place in Columbia since 1975, has been unsuccessful largely due to the introduction of managed care in 1993. Much has been written on the impact of managed care on health service delivery and outcomes in the US in the 1990s, and much has been written about cervical cancer screening (it's unclear what the unconventional abbreviation UCC in this paper means), so an analysis that combines these topics in a country outside the US would be welcome. However, these authors do not ground their statistical analysis in either literature. This is unfortunate. Unless the authors can incorporate experts on their team to correct this, this deficiency is a fatal flaw in my view. The paper is improved but it lacks the expertise required to make a contribution to either of the literatures it touches upon. The analysis is based on mortality rates from cervical cancer but, as the authors note, the mortality data is incomplete. Techniques for correcting it involve important unresolved debates, so even the methods in this MS --which is the strongest part-- do not seem reliable. Since the whole argument rests on finding differential cervical cancer mortality rates in different departements of Columbia, the authors claim that the screening program is failing (which is may or may not be) is due to the failure of managed care is weak if not specious. While I might otherwise reject this MS as scientifically unsound, I am willing to work with the authors because their focus is very understudied.

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

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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.