Reviewer's report

Title: Effective population management practices in diabetes care - an observational study

Version: 1 Date: 25 May 2010

Reviewer: jeremy turner

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Discretionary revisions:

Frolich and co authors present the results of an interesting, if limited, piece of work in which they have explored systemic factors affecting quality of diabetes service provision in the US. The work is well written and clearly presented. While the conclusions appear sound, there are some design and methodological flaws which should at least be addressed in more detail in the discussion and which in an ideal world might prompt a more fundamental review of their experimental design. These are as follows:

1. Their work is based on a single health-provider, a more heterogeneous research population would obviously make the findings more credible.
2. While Frolich et al explain why they have chosen the end points (glycaemic and lipid screening), it is still a great shame to the clinical reader that they didn’t also include a clinical endpoint (eg HbA1c, blood pressure, retinopathy).
3. I also think that the chosen end-points are relatively unambitious and therefore may not be of highest discriminatory value - one would hope that in a 1st world country most patients are having their HbA1c and LDL-cholesterol measured annually! - was the reason for selection of these two criteria stated?
4. Data collection methods are also open to criticism: a single interview at each centre is obviously open to bias.
5. I would like to recommend that the HbA1c value is also stated in IFCC units as well as %, and the LDL-C in SI units as well as mg/dl.
6. It would be interesting to see a discussion of the effects financial incentives on quality of service provision. While I note that it is the first item in table 1, it is quite topical at present in view of the UK experience where the family physicians have the so-called "QOF" payments.

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