Reviewer's report

Title: A cost analysis to estimate the average resource utilisation and cost associated with administering risperidone long-acting injection in the Australian Community.

Version: 1 Date: 8 April 2011

Reviewer: Tuoyo Okorosobo

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?

The question posed by the authors is useful and well defined. The paper is timely and of interest as it will help inform on resource allocation.

The absence of a review of the literature on economic evaluation of mental health programs is striking, even if the authors state that their literature search did not identify any published estimates of costs in community setting. It would be useful to provide a succinct brief on the literature on cost analysis in mental health programs with a conclusion that the specifics that this study addresses do not exist.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?

2a The questionnaire survey method is well described, as is the target respondent. Piloting helped strengthen the relevance and quality of the questionnaire.

2b The study (in the third paragraph of the Resource Valuation section) identifies the time spent by the mental health nurse as the major resource to be valued for all three settings. The authors need to state that there are other costs associated with the delivery of the service but these are held constant for the sake if the comparison between the two-weekly and the four-weekly injection regimens.

3. Are the data sound?

3a The response rate of 29% for the questionnaire is very low. It would be important to indicate if there was any follow up made to respondents to get feedback. It would also be important under the methods to indicate what bias
there may be (or the direction of the bias) as a result of the poor response rate. Although the authors indicate that the limited data set is representative of the national survey list and by region, we have not been able to verify this as Figure 3 was not available with the manuscript provided.

3b The reason why the authors chose to obtain the value of the labour time per minute by dividing the fee obtained from the Australian medical benefits schedule (Reference 2) by the time used by the mental health workers to administer an injection is unclear. Intuitively this value should be derived by dividing the fee by 20.

3c In the last paragraph of the Resource Valuation section, the authors state …"it was conservatively assumed that no more than 2 staff attended". Earlier in the Survey Development section, one of the questions asked of respondents was given as “the number of mental health staff involved in attending mobile outreach visits”. If this question was asked specifically and responses provided, the value obtained from the survey rather than a conservative estimate should be used.

4. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

4a Figures 2 and 3 are not available in the manuscript from the link.

4b The reference to Table 2 in the first paragraph under the Resource Utilisation section should actually be to Table 1. Similarly, instead of Table 3 in this same section, reference should be to Table 2. The last paragraph in this section refers to Table 3 and should be so noted.

4c The central result of the study is the value of $75.14 in potential savings per administration of risperidone LAI averted following a change from a two-weekly to a four weekly regimen. There is no consistent thread in the paper that such a comparison is intended, nor is it obvious that the survey respondents were made aware of this. The implication is that the analysis that follows leading to the figure of $75.14 could be relevant for any other alternative treatment regimen. As a non-specialist, I also assume that the authors’ stance is that all conditions and costs are same for the two regimens. This should be stated explicitly in the paper. The conclusion that a savings of about $11 million per year will be realised with a switch might be different if a full comparison of the costs involved in the two regimens are determined.

5. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?

To a large extent. Mention is made to a “Question 3” in the text which seems out of place. The sentence should be rephrased. See earlier comments, including on the response rate in 3a above.

6. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?

Yes
7. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
Yes.

7a It would be useful to have a sentence in the abstract describing the limitations of the methods

8. Is the writing acceptable?
Yes

Discretionary Revisions
Comments in 1, 2a, 2b, 5, 7a

Essential Revisions
Comments in 3a, 3b, 3c, 4a, 4b, 4c

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 declare that I have no competing interests

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