Reviewer's report

Title: The validity of using ICD-9 codes and pharmacy records to identify patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease

Version: 2 Date: 11 January 2011

Reviewer: P Camp

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Major compulsory revisions:
1. Age of participants. The authors re-did the analysis with patients <40 years of age excluded, with little change in the results. I would feel more comfortable with these patients excluded, or at the least have the table they presented available to readers on the online supplement, with a sentence in the manuscript reporting that including only those patients over 40 did not change the findings.

2. ICD9 490. The inclusion of the statement regarding the lack of specificity should also be referenced.

3. Primary and secondary codes. If the authors could provide a percentage to go along with their comment of 'uncommonly' ie this field was used only xx% of the time etc. this would be helpful.

4. I don't really agree with the author’s argument - empiric therapy would change after spirometry if the diagnosis ends up being something other than COPD. And to me the period after diagnosis with spirometry makes more sense. However, I will leave this difference of opinion to the editor.

5. No comment.

Minor Essential Revisions
6. No comment.
7. No comment.
8. No comment.

Discretionary Revisions
9-14. No comment.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.