Reviewer's report

Title: Validation of the Treatment Identification Strategy of the HEDIS Addiction Quality Measures: Concordance with Medical Record Review

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Reviewer: Dennis McCarty

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Harris, AHS, Reeder, RN, Ellerbe, LS & Bowe, TR
Validation of the Treatment Identification Strategy of the HEDIS Addiction Quality Measures: Concordance with Medical Record Review

The study examines the concordance of progress notes with diagnostic and service delivery codes in the VA electronic record systems to assess the validity of the HEDIS measures for the initiation and engagement in addiction treatment. Progress notes consistently (90% or better) documented service delivery in specialty addiction treatment inpatient and outpatient treatment units. Documentation was less likely in non-specialty outpatient (63%) and inpatient (46%) medical settings. Because substantial amounts of addiction treatment services are provided within general medical settings, reliance on the electronic medical records alone may over-estimate the proportion of patients meeting HEDIS performance measures for initiation and engagement in addiction treatment services.

The simple analysis provides a useful assessment of the validity of the addiction treatment initiation and engagement performance measures. The finding that addiction treatment services are documented in only 63% of general outpatient settings and 46% of general inpatient settings in VA clinics substantially limits the assessment of treatment initiation and engagement. These problems are likely to exist within other health care environments and challenge the validity and usefulness of the HEDIS addiction treatment initiation and engagement measures. Overall the paper is well-written, the data are appropriate, the analysis and conclusion is within the scope of the data.

Minor edits (minor essential revisions) may strengthen the manuscript.

1. The placement of Table 4 is perplexing. In text, it is described after Table 5 is described. Table 4 is similar to Table 3 and should be mentioned first during the discussion of Table 2 and Table 3. Alternatively, Table 4 could be deleted and the detail could simply be described in text.

2. Page 14 minor typo and word choices issues. Line 1 use the word “Because” not “Since”. Since is a measure of time not causation. Line 7 typo on word “specification”.

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.