Reviewer's report

**Title:** A reduction in public funding for fertility treatment - an econometric analysis of access to treatment and savings to government.

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 30 March 2012

**Reviewer:** Mark Connolly

**Reviewer's report:**

**Major compulsory:**

As the authors state in the Discussion, costs to consumers can influence multiple birth rates. However, in the analysis described here the authors have overlooked this element and have used a multiple birth rate from 2009 which is prior to the date of the policy change. It would seem more appropriate to make some estimate as to how the policy will influence multiples, especially considering the authors have acknowledged that costs to patients will influence behaviour and increase multiples. But this point does not appear to have been addressed in the analysis.

In the Background section the authors state that the government anticipated that $64.4 would be saved by the policy. If the government already had performed such an analysis, what does this work add to what was already declared by the government in relation to the policy? In this respect the analysis seems to be a validation of a government policy. If cost savings is different, and it appears to be $12 million different, it would seem useful to explain why the disparity exists.

**Minor Essential Revisions:**

There is some discussion of the results in the Results section. Commentary on results should be saved for the discussion.

The findings here that younger consumers are less price sensitive to changes in policy is one of the interesting findings of the paper. This finding is different from previous reimbursement changes in Germany where older patients were less price sensitive. Considering the varying nature of these findings it would seem appropriate to discuss them in the results.

The analysis here should be labelled as a partial analysis that only considers government medical expenditure. There is no assessment of the downstream costs associated the policy such as multiples, and cost consequences that may arise from changes in birth rates. I might be informative to highlight these points in the Discussion.

**Discretionary revisions**

There seems to be excess Tables and Figures for what is essentially a confirmation of a government reimbursement change. I believe cutting down the
amount of information would improve the quality of the paper and increase likelihood that people will read the paper.

The Background section could also benefit from some trimming with emphasis given to the key elements of price sensitivity and behavioural response to price increases.

**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:**

none