Reviewer’s report

Title: Unintentional non-adherence to chronic prescription medications: how unintentional is it really?

Version: 1 Date: 30 June 2011

Reviewer: Sarah Clifford

Reviewer’s report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

Methods section: this section needs further information/clarification on the following points so that the reader can be clear about exactly who was studied and the measures used.

1. Study population, third paragraph: Could the authors explain what they mean by “index condition”? What did they do if participants had multiple conditions? How did they decide what was the “index condition”?

2. Study population, third paragraph: It isn’t clear why non-persisters were excluded, as patients can be non-persistent to one medication but persistent to others. The definition the authors used to define non-persisters (“if they had, in the last year, stopped taking A prescription medication for ONE of the six conditions without their providers telling them to do so”), means that they may have excluded people who were non-persistent to one medication for one of the conditions but were persistent to other medications for the main condition or persistent to medications for other conditions. This needs to be clarified. Would it be more accurate to say, “Only subjects who self-identified themselves as persistent to (i.e. currently on therapy with) ALL the prescription medications for their index disease form the analytic sample for the current study”?

3. Survey content, first paragraph: Were participants asked the adherence questions about each of their prescription medications for their index condition or were they just asked the questions once in relation to their prescription medications overall?

4. Survey content, first paragraph: The authors should provide more information about where the three questions on unintentional non-adherence and the 11 questions on intentional non-adherence came from and whether they have been validated?

5. Analysis section: In the second paragraph, which adherence measure was used in the analysis needs to be clearer – e.g. it’s not clear whether the 3 items of unintentional non-adherence and 11 items of intentional non-adherence were used or the Adherence Estimator® to create the scale score of 0 – 100% adherence. In the first paragraph it would be helpful to see more information on how exactly patients were classified as low, medium or high risk for
non-adherence.

Minor Essential Revisions

None.

Discretionary Revisions

1. Study population, first paragraph: a little more detail is needed about what the Harris Interactive Chronic Illness Panel is, e.g. what is meant by the term “panel” and does it consist solely of adults in the US or further afield? Also, a brief mention is needed of the rationale for why the inclusion criteria were focused on the 6 specific chronic diseases and those aged 40 or over.

2. In the Discussion section, paragraph 4, some of the results are repeated. It would be more useful for the reader to see an explanation of these results rather than the numbers (which are already in the results section), e.g. that lower perceived need for medications was associated with greater likelihood of being careless with medications, etc.

3. Discussion, paragraph 8: the authors state that “Most intentional non-adherence occurs in the first six months of therapy” but intentional non-adherence can occur at any time. Maybe it would be more accurate to say, “non-persistence most commonly occurs in the first six months of therapy”?

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.