Reviewer's report

Title: Practice characteristics and prior authorization costs: Secondary analysis of data collected in 9 Central New York primary care practices

Version: 1 Date: 14 October 2013

Reviewer: Natan Kahan

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Major Compulsory Revisions:
1. Although the authors have described the objective of the study in the abstract: “…to estimate the effects of practice characteristic on time spent per prior authorization request…” they have not included a clear description of the objective in the Background section of the paper itself.

2. The paper should include information on what drugs and services were subject to PA restrictions in the target population of practices. Additionally, the authors should describe any variance in case-mix, both in patients and technologies requested that may have confounded the observed time needed to process requests and may be responsible for the disparities observed.

3. The authors should discuss how EHRs influenced the amount of time required to process a PA event. Similarly, the authors should clarify whether these reductions were observed in events processed by all staff members which would indicate that non-physician clinical and clerical staffs have been trained to utilize this technology in routine practice.

Discretionary Revisions
1. It is my understanding that the motivation for this study was that “Prior Authorization” was the number 1 answer given by physicians at the SALT#Net Convocations of 2008 and 2009: to the question: “What bothers bothers (or bugging) you in practice?” (http://www.mayo.edu/mayo-edu-docs/center-for-translational-science-activities-documents/3-impact-prior-authorization-morley.pdf).

   This observed response seems to be descriptive of the so-called “Hassle Effect” of PA which in addition to the “Sentinel Effect” is imposed via a PA requirement as a strategy to incentivize physicians to prescribe less expensive interventions not subject to PA restrictions. The authors therefore should consider describing the underlying theory of PA in the Introduction section for the benefit of readers unfamiliar with these concepts and how they constitute the dynamics of the PA process.

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