Reviewer's report

Title: What proportion of prescription items dispensed in community pharmacies are eligible for the New Medicine Service?

Version: 1 Date: 10 January 2014

Reviewer: Carlos Alvarez

Reviewer's report:

Major:
1. This paper may be geared more to an English audience than an international audience. The importance of this study, as it is currently written, is unclear. While it is clear that this paper would have a policy impact in England, it is not clear what impact this paper would have in foreign countries.

2. It is unclear what makes a prescription eligible for NMS services. Since this is the primary outcome, it is important to have a clear definition of NMS. Are there other conditions that must be met to become eligible? This may help the reader understand why you decided to cluster pharmacies by distance.

3. The exclusion of pharmacies from the study due to having too low (<1,000 prescriptions/week) or high (“so busy”) prescription volume may have led to biased estimate of eligible prescription items. This needs to be highlighted in the limitation section of the discussion.

Minor:
1. Abstract
   a. Methods: No need to specify which statistical package was used in the study. Best kept in the methods section within the body of the paper.
   b. Conclusions: Page 3; please include comma after “Therefore,…”

2. Background
   a. Page 4; Please clarify the difference between a community pharmacist and a superintendent pharmacist. This may be country specific.
   b. Page 4; It is unclear why distance would affect whether an item is eligible.
   c. Page 4; What is a “high street pharmacy”?
   d. Page 4; What drugs are listed as MDA? This can be further explained in the methods, if desired.
   e. Page 4; Please define PSNC.

3. Methods
   a. Page 5; The sentence “For convenience, the pharmacies sampled were located in the Nottingham area as that was where the researcher was based”
should be removed. The previous sentence can read “This study was carried out in pharmacies in Nottingham belonging to a large chain to minimise inter-pharmacy variation.”

b. Page 7; Is the estimate for the percentage of prescriptions items eligible for NMS 0.5% or 0.05%?

c. Page 7; May want to consider using non-parametric one sample test such as the chi-square or one-sample binomial tests to determine statistical significance.

4. Discussion

a. Page 9; Please consider changing “anti-platelets” to “anti-platelet agents”.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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.