Reviewer's report

Title: Cost-consciousness among Swiss doctors: a cross-sectional survey

Version: 1 Date: 27 April 2005

Reviewer: Katherine Virgo

Reviewer's report:

General
The authors use survey methodology to assess the level of cost-consciousness among the members of the Geneva Medical Association and the Swiss Association of Interns/Registrars, Geneva Section.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
1. Background: It would be helpful if the authors could compare and contrast the doctors as a gatekeeper in the Swiss system versus the doctor as a gatekeeper in the U.S. system.
2. Results: Given the low response rate, it would be helpful if the authors would provide a Table comparing the demographic and available practice characteristics of those who responded versus those who did not. The two organizations should be able to provide some information about their members.
3. Doctors attitude toward health care costs: If "the distribution of the answers to most questions was skewed," was any action taken to correct for the skewness?
4. Relationship to socio-demographic and work-related characteristics: The statement, "Doctors who saw fewer patients per week and spend more time with each new patient were also more cost-conscious," seems counter-intuitive. Explain this result.
5. Strengths and limitations: Cross-sectional studies (such as surveys that gather data at a single point in time) are generally designed to infer cause-and-effect relationships or to determine the need for services or change. Yet the authors state that "the main limitation of the study was its cross-sectional design, which precludes any formal conclusion about causality." Please explain.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
1. Table 1: Replace the vague footnote with the more explicit wording from the measurement of cost consciousness section of the methods section (Negatively worded ...
2. Methods section, predictors of cost-consciousness: This section is worded like a results section. Are these perhaps predictors identified from the literature which may or may not be predictors in the current study? Define "stress from uncertainty."
3. Data analysis: Explain to the reader why continous predictors, which usually have more statistical power if left in a continuous format, have been converted into quartiles.
4. Results: When quoting means in the text for age, years since graduation, etc., quote only the standard deviation in parentheses, not the quartiles.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
1. Abstract: Change "Knowing what influence physician attitude toward..." to "Knowing what influences physician attitudes toward..."
2. Abstract: Change "...number of patient per..." to "...number of patients per..."
3. Background, 2nd paragraph: Change "...11 most doctors were not interested" to "...most doctors
were not interested"
4. Sub-heading for this section: Appears a heading was left out?

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.