Reviewer's report

Title: Predictors of colorectal cancer screening in diverse primary care practices

Version: 1 Date: 22 June 2006

Reviewer: Theodore Levin

Reviewer's report:

General

Understanding the predictors of exposure to colorectal cancer screening is an important part of improving penetration of the screening into unscreened populations.

This analysis is a little "stale" coming as it does 5 years or more after the office visits in question occurred. There have been a number of policy changes that have occurred which may make the report outdated.

- Guideline changes in favor of screening by the US Preventive Services Task Force
- More widespread coverage of colonoscopy for screening average risk adults, including Medicare members.

- Publicity campaigns, such as the now famous Katie Couric colonoscopy (Arch Intern Med. 2003 Jul 14;163(13):1601-5.

In addition, I think a big part of the results can be attributable to a reminder program in the VA system specifically for FOBT screening.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

The authors should indicate how the predictor variables were chosen for this analysis (were they just what was available from the prior study, or were there meaningful clinical or scientific reasons to consider them in the analysis).

The authors should re-evaluate their logistic regression models based on likely interactions between age, male gender, income, and VA clinic attendance. This may explain many of the observed associations. If interactions are present, perhaps the logistic regression models can be made to be more parsimonious, with fewer predictors included.

The obvious conclusion from the observation of screening exposure and clinic visits is that primary care physicians should investigate means to deliver screening outside of standard office visits. Mailed reminders or invitations to low attending patients is one way to boost screening exposure. If the authors agree, they should include this in their discussion.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

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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: Yes

Declaration of competing interests:

No competing interests.