Reviewer’s report

Title: Quality of care for older adults with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and asthma based on comparisons to practice guidelines and smoking status

Version: 2 Date: 12 December 2007

Reviewer: R J Halbert

Reviewer’s report:

The authors have examined a well-defined data set to examine the quality of care (as compared to guideline recommendations) among older adults with respiratory disease. The research question (as I understand it) is very important but is not clearly reflected in the analysis presented. Some of the methods are very well described, while other areas (for example, the collection of information on medication use) are not sufficiently detailed. The data as presented suggest missing information in key areas.

- Major Compulsory Revisions
  â¢ My main issue with this manuscript is that the authors have bits of epidemiology, bits of healthcare utilization, and bits of guideline adherence all mixed together in one paper. For this reason, it is difficult to understand 1) exactly what the authors are trying to achieve, and 2) exactly how to understand the findings presented. The authors need to find a main point and stick to it.
  â¢ The findings presented suggest the strong possibility that there are missing data on medication use â## for example, among persons receiving no short-acting bronchodilator, 49% are on supplemental oxygen, which seems highly improbable. Given the importance of this data element to the authorsâ## primary points, the methods describing how the data on medication use were obtained should be clarified. Furthermore, the authors must discuss the potential for missing data in the Discussion â## how likely are missing data? Why? What is the likely potential impact on their findings? Etc.
  â¢ The description of statistical methods are inadequate to understand what was done.

- Minor Essential Revisions
  â¢ In Table 2, the units for health care utilization (â##Number of physician visitsâ##, â##Number of days in hospitalâ##) have no denominator â## do these represent mean utilization per person, utilization per 1000 person-years, or what?
  â¢ The authors need to use a consistent verb tense.

- Discretionary Revisions
  â¢ In Tables 1 and 2, the authors have presented most of their data as rates per 100. It would be more appropriate to present rates per 1000 or per 10,000, in keeping with the frequency of events and the size of the dataset.
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: Needs some language corrections before being published

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