Reviewer's report

Title: The impact of generic-only drug benefits on patients' use of inhaled corticosteroids in a Medicare population with asthma

Version: 2 Date: 16 April 2008

Reviewer: Michael A Fischer

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This remains a strong article.

Including Table 1 addresses one of my comments.

In terms of the other comment, the breakdown by disease severity summarized in Table 5 is helpful. It is intriguing that the changes in days of supply are basically the same regardless of disease severity. It would be helpful to present the absolute days of supply number in that table (the table is small and the data could fit in there). We should expect to see a much higher days-of-supply in the high-risk group. This will be helpful in two ways:

1) If those patients have much higher baseline use, the relative reduction will be smaller than that for more moderate users, although still differential across benefit design, which would change the clinical interpretation, though only slightly.

2) If for some reason the higher-risk patients do not have a high days-of-supply, I would be worried about whether there have been problems with ascertainment of either disease state or medication use.

If the authors are confident in the result in Table 5, they could be more expansive in the points they make at the beginning of the third paragraph of the Discussion. If this kind of coverage scheme serves as an undifferentiated "speed bump" regardless of the clinical severity of the patient's condition and their corresponding need for medication, that is concerning.

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