Author's response to reviews

Title: Access to primary healthcare services for the Roma population in Serbia: a secondary data analysis.

Authors:

Leanne C Idzerda (lidzerda@uottawa.ca)
Orvill Adams (orvill@orvilladams.com)
Jonathan Patrick (patrick@telfer.uottawa.ca)
Ted Schrecker (tschrecker@gmail.com)
Peter Tugwell (elacasse@uottawa.ca)

Version: 2 Date: 20 April 2011

Author's response to reviews: see over
We would like to thank the reviewers for their thoughtful comments. Please see below our response to each of their concerns.

“In general the data is well defined. However, the authors use "general population" to describe what is in fact the top 80% of the population. This is a bit confusing. Might not one expect it to refer to the all the population other than ROMA. This should be corrected. This does not alter the key findings since most of the these are based on comparing Roma with the lowest quintile (20%) of the population only.” We have included a line in the methods section to clarify the definition of each population group.

The manuscript adheres to relevant standards for reporting and data presentation. However, the reviewer finds that the detailed exposition of Roma history is not essential to the question the paper addresses and could be edited down for better presentation. After careful consideration, we are highly reluctant to omit the history of the Roma, as it is important to understanding the discrimination issue (which we have tried to address as well) and in understanding the motivation for the study. We have however tried to shorten this section slightly.

The definition of "Effective Coverage" (last line page 11 and first line page 12) is unclear and confusing. We have changed this to “At the individual level, coverage can be defined as the probability of receiving a necessary health intervention, conditional on a health care need”

The one potential confounder was the unavailability of data on efficacy, adherence and diagnostic accuracy in the three major data sets. There, the use of data from other studies, while perhaps unavoidable, makes the conclusions a bit more tenuous. Although this reviewer makes an excellent point, we feel that this issue has been thoroughly described in both the discussion and limitations section of the papers.

Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? Yes, although because discrimination is not well-discussed in the data analysis, it should be analyzed as an explicit determinant of health in order for the policy recommendations to be made as they were.

* Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)
Although the authors call attention to the role of factors other than those typically analysed, and address discrimination in their policy recommendations, discrimination as a determinant of health for the Roma does not seem to be adequately addressed. More attention could be made to how discrimination contributes to structural barriers to access to Roma.

We have included a few extra lines on the current state of discrimination in Serbia today on pages 25 and 26 in hope that this addresses the reviewers concerns.

We hope that you will find this paper acceptable for publication.

Kind regards,
Leanne Idzerda
on behalf of Orvill Adams, Jonathan Patrick, Ted Schrecker and Peter Tugwell.