Reviewer's report

Title: Economic burden of diabetes mellitus in the WHO African Region

Version: 4 Date: 25 February 2009

Reviewer: Ken Redekop

Reviewer's report:

I'm happy to see the stratification of the results into three groups of countries. While I might have chosen to use a different method of presentation, but I appreciate the fact that different types of parameters had to be combined in order to estimate overall economic burden in a continent such as Africa.

I could question the validity of a couple of the assumptions; for example, the frequency of testing is even greater than what is sometimes seen in western countries. However, my take on this publication is that it helps to highlight the fact that a lot more work needs to be done. One useful step for policymakers is to consider carefully which parameters require more attention (i.e., more funding), with the ultimate goal of improving health and not just saving money.

Minor Essential Revisions

Small grammatical and typographical errors need correction. For example, Bercelo should be Barcelo throughout. Another example is found in the Appendix on page 26, where reference is made to the Number of tablets taken per person per day (n=1500); this should of course be the number per person per year.

One issue that I didn't indicate in my original comments was the fact that use of the human capital method used in the study's analyses results in larger estimates of economic burden due to productivity loss than the friction method. Colleagues of mine here at Erasmus are strong proponents of the latter, but the human capital method continues to be used despite its shortcomings. This could be noted in the Discussion section (as part of Limitation "b"). Let me know if you need some references for this.

The distinction between Table 3 and Table 4 needs to be made clearer, particularly in the tables themselves. Footnotes may help.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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