Reviewer's report

Title: Policymakers' and other stakeholders' perceptions of key considerations for health system decisions and the presentation of evidence to inform those considerations: an international survey

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Reviewer: Nicholas Barron Mays

Reviewer's report:

From the perspective of collecting and presenting further survey results on what 'policy makers' think about the criteria they should take into account in their health system decisions and the best way to summarise evidence to support those decisions, the objectives, methods, findings and conclusions of this paper are all reasonable. However, from the perspective of understanding and 'improving' health system decision making, it could be argued that the paper contributes little in that it is hard to interpret the significance of the views of a diverse, but probably highly atypical group of policy 'advisers' (I suspect this would be a more accurate term for many of them rather than 'policy makers') who are also likely to have had significant prior exposure to the type of thinking represented by the authors of the survey.

How are we to interpret the generally supportive views of the 112 respondents, the vast majority of whom had clinical backgrounds and research training/experience? It seems highly likely that those responding already had broadly positive views of the DECIDE framework and/or similar tools. It is further unlikely that such people would express much by way of dissent from the broad approach taken by DECIDE in a survey of this type. As a result, it is not clear how much further these findings take us.

The authors conclude that, 'This survey supports the use of the DECIDE framework for health system decisions ...', but can this claim be made on the basis of the responses to this type of survey? A more accurate formulation would be to say that the respondents to the survey expressed supportive attitudes to the use of the DECIDE framework. We have little or no data on how the respondents act or intend to act in advising on or taking health system decisions in practice. We have no indication as to whether use of the DECIDE framework will alter decisions compared with other (perhaps more implicit) approaches, and we have no idea whether any altered decisions would confer benefits compared with some different (less rational) approach.

Level of interest: Reject as not of sufficient priority to merit publishing in this journal

Quality of written English: Acceptable
**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I have no competing interests of the type listed above.