Author's response to reviews

Title: Correlating pharmaceutical data with a national health survey as a proxy for estimating rural population health

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Version: 5 Date: 23 August 2010

Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Dr. Ezzati:

On behalf of my co-authors I am pleased to re-submit our original research manuscript to Population Health Metrics - “Correlating Pharmaceutical Data with a National Health Survey as a Proxy for Estimating Rural Population Health,” (MS: 1600073350309935). The technique we use in the manuscript focuses on using prescriptions-filled data at the county level as a proxy measure for chronic illness prevalence, especially as it relates to rural areas which usually can not be extrapolated from national survey data. We argue in the manuscript that our tests validate prescription-filled data as a viable proxy measure for **diagnosed** chronic illness, especially in the absence of small area measures. As such, it is a potentially new and useful metric of population health.

We have addressed the issue of undiagnosed disease by inserting an extensive discussion on page 24. We have also made clear that our methodology addresses only diagnosed and treated disease at the sub-state level throughout the manuscript.

We have uploaded nine color maps, three each which depict the chronic illnesses in question: heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

Mississippi State University is not a member of BioMed Central. As such, we agreed to the 2009 article-processing charge of $1,535.

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

We would like to thank the three diligent reviewers for their thoughtful and probing questions. This helped us provide a fuller explanation of the methodology, assumptions and limitations. We would also like to thank the editors and staff of *Population Health Metrics* for working with us to bring this manuscript to publication.

Any communication regarding this article should be directed to me except during the period of August 27 – September 8 during which communication should be directed to our second author, Dr. Jeralynn Cossman at: lynne.cossman@ssrc.msstate.edu. I look forward to working with your staff on this manuscript. Thank you very much for your consideration.

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