Reviewer's report

Title: Costs and Effects of Interventions targeting Frequent Presenters to the Emergency Department: a Systematic and Narrative Review

Version: 2 Date: 08 Nov 2019

Reviewer: Sharif Ismail

Reviewer's report:

My thanks to the editors for a chance to look at this paper again, and to the authors for their work in responding comprehensively to the first round of comments. Modifications to the discussion, and to include a study flowchart are important, and welcome.

My remaining comments suggest minor amendments. I have given below the full text of the original comment, and the authors response, followed by my own further comment for two items:

2. Line 98: you say reviews were excluded - does this mean systematic reviews were excluded? There have been several systematic reviews of effectiveness of interventions for frequent attenders recently that did pick up some cost data so I would be interested to know the rationale for the decision if SRs were excluded.

Response: Yes, systematic reviews were excluded from the literature search. We are aware of some literature reviews which have included cost data such as:

Moe, J., Kirkland, S. W., Rawe, E., Ospina, M. B., Vandermeer, B., Campbell, S., Rowe, B. H. (2017) 'Effectiveness of Interventions to Decrease Emergency Department Visits by Adult Frequent Users: A Systematic Review', Academic Emergency Medicine, 24: 1, 40-52

This systematic review focuses on the effectiveness of interventions for frequent users of the ED. It is also one of the reviews which includes a paragraph on 'cost outcomes'. However cost was not one of the main study objectives of that paper. Moe et al summarised the cost information in only one paragraph. It is not possible to adequately assess the cost data for a systematic review such as this one which explicitly examines cost by assessing summarised data. Similarly, other systematic reviews have the same issues and for this reason all systematic reviews have been excluded from the analysis.

FURTHER COMMENT: Would suggest inclusion of a line of text to this effect in the paper - your rationale is clear but may not be so to other readers who have not had it so explained to them.
3. Line 162/3: I was surprised not to see here some assessment of effect size for reductions in ED attendance, and the statistical significance of reductions (where reported). How big were these reductions?

Response: We did not seek to undertake a meta-analysis due to the heterogeneity of the results. For this reason the systematic review, became a narrative review and we did not undertake any statistical analyses.

FURTHER COMMENT: I understand this - I am asking instead for some sense of whether the individual results reported in the papers you included were statistically significant or not (not summary statistics). At the moment table 3 just says whether ED use and costs went up, down or stayed the same, but there is no sense of the order of magnitude for these changes by study. Some sense at least of ranges would be instructive here, to understand the kinds of effects being reported in the individual studies included.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

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