Reviewer’s report

Title: Does a local financial incentive scheme reduce inequalities in the delivery of clinical care in a socially deprived community? A longitudinal data analysis

Version: 1 Date: 24 July 2014

Reviewer: Aloysius Niroshan Siriwardena

Reviewer’s report:

Major compulsory revisions

1. This was a complex paper with quantitative retrospective longitudinal analysis of a local financial incentive scheme. The paper should be reviewed by a statistician but I will focus on the generalities.

2. I found this paper a little confusing because the authors sought to answer two questions. The first was in the title: ‘Does a local financial incentive scheme reduce inequalities in the delivery of clinical care in a socially deprived community?’ The second question was how income earned per patient varied according to practice characteristics including levels of deprivation in the practice population.

3. The presentation and explanation of the results could be made more clear.

4. In the results (Line 420) the authors state that ‘Higher practice deprivation was associated with poorer performance for five indicators’. Are the ORs for comparisons at baseline? This should be made clearer.

5. Table 1 shows numbers of practices participating in each indicator by year. Did the regression analysis take participation into account?

6. Table 3 shows changes in indicators over time overall and dichotomised into change for practices in more or less socioeconomically deprived areas. I think it would be helpful to include this in the paper rather than as online supplementary material since this provides easily understandable data on baseline and final performance for the indicators. The titles should be changed from more or less ‘deprived practices’ to practices in more or less deprived areas.

7. It would help readers to have a more detailed explanation of what Table 4 shows.

8. The authors state high ethnic minority population (20% Asian) but do not account for this in their analysis. This should be stated a limitation of the analysis.

9. The authors found that practices serving more deprived areas achieved lower performance, and therefore also financial rewards, at the beginning and end of the scheme with little evidence of narrowing for most indicators.
10. The authors conclude ‘that financial rewards penalised practices serving more deprived patients, future pay-for-performance schemes also need to address fairness of rewards in relation to workload’. It would be helpful to understand why practices in more deprived areas had lower performance before suggesting that rewards need to be increased for these practice to improve performance.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests