Reviewer’s report

Title: Unmet healthcare needs of elderly people in Korea

Version: 1 Date: 10 Dec 2017

Reviewer: Johanna de Almeida Mello

Reviewer's report:

Dear authors, thank you for this interesting manuscript about unmet needs of older people in Korea. Below you can find my comments and recommendations.

In the background you mention three aspects which can contribute to unmet health care needs: 'availability of services (e.g., waiting time before receiving care, services not available in a required area, etc.), accessibility (cost, transportation, etc.) and acceptability of available services (attitudes toward and knowledge about care, etc.’) but in the sections methodology, results and discussion the aspect of availability of services is not mentioned while it is an important aspect.

In the survey, were there any variables about the region where older people lived, even if not in detail, at least a proxy for rural or urban region? If yes, why did you not include this in the analysis? In case you decided not to include this aspect, please give a reason for it in the limitations section. By the way, you shoulds make a limitations section, also mentioning the bias of non respons.

The total number of participants should be included in the beginning of the Results section and not in the Methods section.

You say the data is from a survey for the period of 2011 until 2013 and that the design is cross sectional, but can you identify if an individual is on the survey twice or three times? I think you might be considering individuals that have more than one measurement and this would be longitudinal. If this is the case, your analysis should be different (longitudinal) or you should consider data for each individual for only one year!
Please define chronic diseases in more detail because the percentage of people in the study with chronic diseases is very high (90%), especially if not so many have a regular family doctor. I wonder if there is a bias in the survey as the non respons is so high. Is it being filled out mostly by people with health concerns? As you mention that the survey is conducted to gather data on the utilization of health care, medical expenditures, health status and behaviour in Korea, healthy people might not be interested in answering these questions ('Of the 47,746 participants in 2011-2013, most were excluded for missing values (not responding to unmet healthcare needs); therefore, data from 8666 participants were analysed in this study.')

Have you checked if the variables 'usual source of care' and 'regular doctor' are not very correlated with each other? I am concerned about your last model when you put them together. Please check for collinearity and, if necessary, you should use only one of these two variables as covariates in the fourth model.

In this phrase: '...because of an unstable income due to retirement; therefore, money is spent on maintaining livelihood rather than medical expenses.', I think the right term is not 'unstable' but 'low'.

Please revise the manuscript for clarity (some examples below):

'Unmet healthcare needs', which is used as an indicator of accessibility for healthcare services, can not only be a result of the phenomenon itself or a numerical value, but it can increase the likelihood of complex diseases and complications by not being treated effectively.'

'The medical insurance system in Korea is free to choose and use hospitals at any time.'

'Second, accessibility should be improved. Korea is supporting catastrophic medical expenses for critical diseases and special transportation to provide for severe disabilities. However, it does not support medical expenses or transportation for the elderly only.'
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.
No

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.
I am able to assess the statistics

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