Reviewer's report

Title: Return-to-work intervention for cancer survivors: budget impact and allocation of costs and returns in the Netherlands and in six major EU-countries

Version: Date: 28 August 2015

Reviewer: Anne Kirchhoff

Reviewer's report:

This report focuses on a budget impact analysis for return to work interventions for cancer patients in the Netherlands. This is an important topic and an interesting concept. However, I have concerns about this manuscript in that the methods and results need better clarification of both the assumptions made for the analyses and better anchoring of the manuscript text to clarify the analysis. These concerns are provided in more detail below.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Background

1. Context on budget impact analysis and why it's important along with a definition (e.g., “expected change in expenditures after a new intervention…”) is needed in the first paragraph of the background.

2. Also, I think the authors need to expand the description as to why they did a BI analysis - as is currently written, it sounds like it's more of a modeling exercise rather than an evaluation to drive policy (which I think the former is more of the authors' intent actually - the audience for this isn't clear to me). Also, please clarify the timeframe of your BI analysis for this paper.

3. Have there been other BIs done for RTW in cancer? This isn't clear from the introduction.

Methods

Intervention description

4. How adherent are patients to the intervention, specifically the 12 week program?

5. Page 6 – why are only 5% of current patients indicated for the rehabilitation treatment? Are the assumptions made about the patients if the RTW program is expanded appropriate if these groups differ?

6. Page 6 - How were these input variables selected and why? This links to page 7, where the inputs for RTW (lines 6-10) were based on a breast cancer RCT - why would this be appropriate to extrapolate to a patient mix that includes other cancers and male patients?
Sensitivity analysis
5. I don’t understand the logic of this – why up to 500 hours earlier work return? How was this range decided?

Base case results
6. Page 8 lines 27-28 and Page 9 lines 1-3: I’m not clear how the jump from 2,476 to 9,674 occurs – is this if the RTW rolls out from 30% to 70%? Please be more specific.

Table 1
7. 5 year survival seems a bit low – US estimates at least are at ~66%
8. also, % age 25-64 isn’t included in the % eligible for intervention? Why not, as those are typical age ranges for employment.

Minor Essential Revisions
Table 1:
1. Typo under new situation, missing 2 from 2015
Table 2
2. “Perspectives of a reference…” spelled wrong

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
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