Reviewer's report

Title: How to Incorporate Broader Outcomes in Economic Evaluations of Public Health Interventions: A qualitative analysis based on semistructured experts interviews

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Reviewer: Laura Bojke

Reviewer's report:

1. MCR: The authors need to clearly set out what the paper is trying to do (at the moment it does not do this). Contrary to the title it does not offer any technical advice on how to incorporate NHO’s into PH EE, it is instead canvassing opinion about what NHO’s are important and instruments we might use to capture these. The qualitative survey is well described but the authors need to be clear about what this is trying to achieve, is it trying to set out the research agenda for PH EE? It needs to have a clearer focus. The work cannot offer any technical assistance for those conducting PH EE, it does not represent the breath of discussion on the issues outstanding (see Weatherley, et al) so it would seem to be more of an agenda setting exercise.

2. MCR: The authors should clearly set out the difference between PH interventions and PH programmes. PH interventions can more easily lend themselves to methods currently used to conduct EE in pharmaceuticals for example, using QALYs as the outcome of interest and restricting to an NHS perspective. PH programmes may be more difficult to use conventional methods for EE, this is largely due to the wider net of effects, in terms of people and outcomes.

3. DR: Some examples for PH EE would be useful as a motivator. What has been done for the PH programme at NICE so far, what outcomes have been included, what limitations have been noted?

4. MCR: The issue of cross sectoral budgets does not get much attention. This is a crucial issue and linked to what outcomes we are assessing. For example air pollution reduction strategies can be paid for by local authorities (LA’s) but using a QALY perspective the benefits are seen by the NHS. This provides further justification for including NHO’s and perhaps unified budgets.

4. DR: The authors should discuss the use of social return on investment methods which are often used in LA’s to determine cost-effectiveness. They may have some place in PH EE, particularly in determining what NHO’s are relevant for each of the stakeholders.

5. MCR: The qualitative interviews conducted seem to be of good quality. It would be good to report the number of non-responses, to gauge how representative the sample is, i.e. what proportion of the surveyed sample actually responded to be interviewed.
6. DR: I am slightly concerned about the narrow focus of respondents, did the authors attempt to survey service users and commissioners?

7. MCR: The authors do discuss the limitations of the work; however I feel that they need to extend this to set out the research agenda for incorporating NHO’s into public health. What do methodologists feel are the outstanding issues, are these important in determining the cost-effectiveness of interventions and programmes, what should be the priorities in terms of further research, are we ready to conduct EE of PH interventions, i.e. do QALYs suffice are we making the wrong decisions? Extending the discussion to cover these issues would be good.

8. DR: The authors do reference relevant work in the area; however they do over simplify some of the outstanding methodological issues discussed in Weatherley, et al for example.

9. MCR: The title does not reflect what work was actually carried out. The interviews and thematic analysis tell us something about what methodologists feel about NHO in PH EE but we (as analysts) cannot use anything from this paper to help us incorporate NHO. I suggest the title is something like “Qualitative interviews to determine opinions regarding incorporation of NHO into public health economic evaluation”. Whilst the paper may be interesting from one perspective it is not a technical paper and the title (and abstract) need to convey the fact that this is just looking at opinion, i.e. no conclusions regarding research priorities is made.

10. DR: The writing is generally clear, however discussion of the results could benefit from shorter paragraphs and perhaps some illustrative examples, in particular when discussing what NHO’s are potentially relevant.

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

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare I have no competing interests