Reviewer's report

Title: Market competition and price of disease management programs: an observational study

Version: 1 Date: 3 March 2014

Reviewer: Ian Li

Reviewer's report:

The study looks at a basic but fundamental point of economics - whether competition (or indicators of competition) has any discernable effects on the price charged. They do this by regressing three indicators of competition, namely, the insurer market concentration as measured by the HH Index, care group (or provider) concentration as measured by number in a specified region, and care group market share of GPs. The results indicate that there is no statistical association between competition and price.

The aim of this study is an interesting one, but I have a number of concerns with the methodological framework of the study.

The level of care group competition was measured by number of care groups in a GGD region. I am not convinced this is an accurate measure, as the authors point out earlier that the population in each GGD region varies widely. The number of care groups in each GGD region is hence a distorted indicator of competition. This might have contributed to the lack of statistical significance in the analyses.

The authors mention that no consumer panel data were available for one GGD region, but do not mention how this issue is treated/rectified.

The lack of statistical significance in the regressions is a concern. This can be interpreted in one of two ways. It might be said that competition and price are not linked, which is what the authors conclude. Another possible reason, however, is that the model is misspecified or that the data is inconclusive. In other words, the evidence is not compelling enough for the conclusions of the paper to be supported. Indeed, the lack of information or confounding effects (which are not measurable based on the data) are discussed in the limitations section of this study.

One other general comment that I have, is that the paper was hard to read. The train of thought of the authors was not easy to follow, and some terms were not adequately defined or explained. For example, the authors mention 'managed competition' (page 4) or 'exit-option' (page 5) but do not explain what they actually mean. There are also numerous editorial and grammatical errors in the manuscript, which either distracts the reader or distorts the meaning being conveyed.
Hence, while the topic is overall an interesting one, I would recommend that the authors revise the study and/or methods.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**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 that I have no competing interests