Author's response to reviews

Title: High-cost health care users in Ontario, Canada: demographic, socio-economic, and health status characteristics

Authors:

Laura C Rosella (laura.rosella@oahpp.ca)
Tiffany Fitzpatrick (tiffany.fitzpatrick@oahpp.ca)
Walter Wodchis (walter.wodchis@utoronto.ca)
Andrew Calzavara (andrew.calzavara@ices.on.ca)
Heather Manson (heather.manson@oahpp.ca)
Vivek Goel (vivek.goel@oahpp.ca)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Dr. Christopher Morrey,

We are pleased to submit the following manuscript “High-cost health care users in Ontario, Canada: demographic, socio-economic, and health status characteristics” for consideration of publication in BMC Health Services Research. This study takes a unique perspective on a universal health care issue by fully characterising high-cost users (HCU) of the health care system.

In Ontario, we have universal health care coverage allowing classification of gradients of use in the entire population. We have characterized users by taking a broader perspective on the relative contributions of both social and clinical factors. We achieved this by linking health administrative data to a population-based health survey conducted by Statistics Canada that contains detailed socio-demographic and behavioural characteristics on a sample that is representative of over 98% of the population. We are also able to link to additional clinical variables derived from the health administrative data that covers the entire population. Additionally, we use more advanced statistical techniques (multinomial models) to explore the full gradients of use (top 1%, 2-5%, 6-49% and bottom 50%). As a result, this study provides new and important information that will help governments around the world grapple with high health care costs.

We believe the findings of this study will be of significant interest to your readers. The findings will inform future work to identify populations at risk of becoming HCU and provides information for policies or interventions to be informed by the economic, social, health status and behavioral profile of HCU. Understanding the broader determinants of HCU is crucial to informing policy decisions addressing the common medical and public health goal of improving population health, and reaching the health care targets of sustainability, better quality of health care, and improved patient outcomes.

We have no additional acknowledgements to report.

Sincerely,

Corresponding Author: Dr. Laura C. Rosella
Email: laura.rosella@oahpp.ca; Phone: 647 260 7416
Mail: 480 University Avenue, Suite 300, Toronto, ON, Canada, M5G 1V2