Reviewer's report

Title: Medicaid prescription limits: policy trends and comparative impact on utilization

Version: 3  Date: 7 December 2014

Reviewer: Federica Angeli

Reviewer's report:

Dear authors,

Thank you for your revision. I very much appreciate the work done to mitigate my concerns and the extensive replies provided to my queries.

Yet, I still have one point that I consider of major importance, and that in my view should be addressed in order to fully valorise the message of your work.

1. I appreciated the new paragraph reported at pg 13, which clarifies the effects of cap policies on patient prescription utilization. However, I am still missing the effect of such policies on the providers' prescription behaviours. For example, how physicians' prescription inclinations can vary in response to cap policies or how pharmacists' advice in guiding patients may change under the influence of the new policy are important factors in determining the final patient medication list. Without including the providers' role, the drug utilization choice seems to be relying entirely on the patients' individual evaluation, which can deliver a very incomplete picture of how prescription utilization behaviour unfolds. Once again, I would find it helpful to understand more concretely how these policies are implemented. Is the maximum number of prescriptions recommended per patient, physician or health practice level? Moreover, I strongly suggest adding references to studies exploring the effect of policy changes on patient and providers' behaviour.

Minor, yet essential revisions

2. I suggest reorganizing the methods section into four main headlines: ‘Data Collection’, ‘Sample’, ‘Outcomes’ and ‘Data analyses’. The first and the latter would remain as they are. The ‘Sample’ section should include all information pertaining to the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the states forming your sample. Hence, the paragraph currently under ‘Outcomes’, starting with ‘We considered a subset of states……’ until ‘…Virginia and Wisconsin’ should go under ‘Sample’. Likewise, the sentences currently under Results and headline ‘Impact of cap policy implementation on prescription use’ should go under Sample. It follows that the headline ‘Impact of cap policy etc’ disappears (its meaning was vague to me anyway).

I hope these comments will be helpful in providing the final touch to a well-written, insightful work.

Best wishes
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