Reviewer’s report

Title: "Implications of Cost-Sharing for Observation Care among Medicare Beneficiaries: A Pilot Survey"

Version: 0 Date: 04 Dec 2018

Reviewer: Ekaterina (Katia) Noyes

Reviewer's report:

The authors provide empirical evidence in support of their statement that cost-sharing for observational care may have unintended consequences on subsequent health utilization for low-income Medicare beneficiaries. This study provides unique insights into patient behavior and decision-making and could have important implications for developing better, more patient-centered healthcare reimbursement mechanisms.

Because of the limited study sample size (144 instead of 686 interviews as recommended based on the power calculation), I would recommend that the authors present their finding as a Debate/Controversial Issues report rather than a Research Study. Regardless of whether they do that or not, the authors should present a more nuanced Introduction and Discussion explaining the rationale for why hospitals may admit some patients for an observational stay rather "inpatient admission" - which is likely to do with reducing hospital risk of readmission penalty or lack of inpatient beds. Perhaps a more detailed analysis of reasons for observational admission, patient comorbidity profiles, and prior and subsequent healthcare utilization patterns could lead to potential explanations of hospital behavior. For example, an admission for an observational stay for an ambulatory sensitive or "social" condition (i.e., lack of informal caregiving for an elderly person with disability) should be analyzed and managed very differently than an admission for a true medical emergency. Also, it would be important for the readers to have an estimate of the magnitude of a bill for inpatient vs. observation stay, and the relative frequency of both types of admissions.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes
Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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