Reviewer's report

Title: Complementarity/substitutability of government and charity funding of cancer research: a stated preference study

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Reviewer: Jeshika Singh

Reviewer's report:

The study is well written, has a well-defined question and given the authors it is bound to be well conducted. From my own experience I believe the authors might struggle to convince many about the importance of this article, nevertheless it is an interesting piece of work and it will be good to have it available for those who are keen on the topic and/or methods used. In terms of overall comment, the article is very lengthy with six figures and four tables. It would be good to have it shorter and crisper, so that the readers don’t get lost in the details. Here are specific comments:

In terms of context, it would be good to have recent examples of increase or cut in funding by the government to make the subject more relevant/topical. And why do governments take such actions? It could be recession-led, political influences or unclear – but some insight into the reasoning would be useful as the findings of this study could indirectly undermine or support those beliefs.

Regarding the literature review on the relationship of government and charity funding, the authors found little in the literature. I found the findings from reference 11 and 12 interesting and relevant but the rest did not help me understand the direction the article was heading to. The three research questions that the authors chose came as a surprise. Also the focus on cancer research felt sudden although cancer is actually mentioned on the title. The authors explain the research questions in great details in methods section but it would have been better to have a preamble leading to it that would help the readers understand why those questions were considered rather than having it come up abruptly.

Methods section is described in detail and so are the results. Both were clearly written but very lengthy. I had a query regarding why authors chose a portion of the ‘income tax’ to measure willingness to pay of the public when the authors already know that it is not possible to relocate tax income in that way (In 18-21 on pg 6, In 9-10 on pg 23), wouldn’t it have been more realistic and perhaps have generalisable if the authors had instead asked respondent to imagine spending a portion of their disposable income. Also one could say that the results are reflecting how the respondents would like the government to spend its income rather than being a reflection of their own private funding to charities. If the authors are keen on examining relationship of charity funding versus government spending, please ignore this query but make it clearer in the paper…

Discussions were clear but one item I found missing was a discussion about
ordering effect (ln 5-10, pg 9). Finally the focus seems to be on complementarity and substitutability, but can any inference be made regarding cancer research is valued by the respondent based on say crowding out. I am not sure if I understand how to interpret these results regarding how the respondents value cancer research, the results here are really mixed as its suggesting they value cancer research when government cuts funding on it but not when governments increases spending on it. Maybe public doesn’t care about cancer research so much? Or is it just the changes in government spending that they want to offset? And why so?

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

none