Reviewer’s report

Title: Variations in bariatric surgical care pathways: a national costing study on the variability of services and impact on costs

Version: 1 Date: 31 Jul 2018

Reviewer: Martin Hensher

Reviewer's report:

This is a nice and simple study that adds valuable information on an aspect of the costs of bariatric surgery that has not been well described previously. I would certainly recommend publication subject to a little more detail on a methods question:

Did the authors undertake any follow-up discussion / validation of the survey returns with each of the ten centres? Given the wide divergence in services and resources reported, I think it is important to be clear about this (either way), as it may be material to the comparability of reporting by each of the centres. The methods section needs to cover this (ESSENTIAL)

In particular, Table 1: Centre 10 description mentions "sleep apnoea 3 months treatment", but it is not immediately clear in Additional File 2 whether any specialist input for sleep apnoea was captured. Was this checked / validated (especially given that centre 10 does not appear to be particularly expensive in Table 2)? (DESIRABLE)

More generally, I think the article could be strengthened with some clarifications of the following issues:

Page 8 line 36-38. The authors say "these costs are unlikely to impact greatly on cost-effectiveness, being a relatively small proportion of total costs...". Probably true, and I appreciate this study is not about the primary procedure costs of the surgery itself. However, I think it would be extremely helpful context to provide a brief summary of evidence on the procedure costs for bariatric surgery (e.g. from their previous work or from other UK studies). Even better would be if they could cite any equivalent evidence on variation in procedure costs across centres, so we can see whether the variation in pre-op and post-op is relatively greater than variation in primary treatment costs. (DESIRABLE)

A few thoughts in the discussion / conclusion on how future research might capture differences in outcome attributable to different pre- and post-op models would be very interesting (DESIRABLE).
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

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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