

Reviewer's report

Title: What are the roles involved in establishing and maintaining informational continuity of care within family practice? A systematic review

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Reviewer: Ngaire Kerse

Reviewer's report:

This is a relatively novel aspect of continuity of care which to my knowledge has not been well defined previously. The relevance of it to outcomes could be more clearly stated.

The title is slightly misleading as the within family practice is not immediately obvious. It is better defined later in the article but perhaps between patients and doctors would be more explicit.

The methods are clear and the search strategy appropriate. The inclusion and exclusion criteria are not really stated from this review. That is of course as it is a new area to define, but perhaps the authors would like to have a go at describing them more succinctly. There also appears to be no attempt at quality scoring. This is probably because the articles were of mixed designs however most types of articles have some systematic ways of working out some level of quality and this should be considered. This is acknowledged in the limitations, however I do think that it limits the interpretability of the information and should be included in this report.

The data extraction sheet intrigues me as to combine information from several types of articles is difficult. This would be a good form to present in an appendix.

The organization of the results is excellent and reads very well. I am surprised that the ethical and legal aspects of sharing information between patients and doctors were not apparent. Sharing mental health information for instance has implications for insurance and employment and sometimes it is omitted from discussion and recordings of discussion on purpose.

It is also surprising that there is not much information about aspects of the roles related to success of family practice, or quality of care. This leaves this article with a mainly descriptive or conceptual focus, lacking a steer in any particular direction for the reader. Elements of the discussion, such as that about "Certain primary care arrangements may be detrimental to the natural flow of information between patients and doctors (e.g. over reliance on walk-in clinics). Finally, nurses and ancillary staff may be able to play a role in informational continuity of care also in which their more stable interpersonal relationships with patients facilitate information transfer both within and beyond family practice".

Are not clearly linked to the information found in the review and are perhaps

extrapolation. It would be good to clearly link discussion points to findings from the review.

Overall this is an interesting article which with refinement could be made well worthwhile.

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:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'