Reviewer's report

Title: Are they really refusing to travel? A qualitative study of prehospital records

Version: 1 Date: 16 July 2006

Reviewer: Sandra M Schneider

Reviewer's report:

General

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

The article does not contain enough information about the prehospital system dispatch to understand the implication of your study. Please include some basic information about your system, number of calls, general demographics of your community. Also we need more information about the dispatching system you currently use. What is the training of the dispatcher? How much information is obtained and what level of advise is given? What is the protocol for non transport? Is there medical control at an MD level? This information is essential especially for readers outside the UK.

The information on Page 5 para 2 that starts "A count of the number of instances... is very unclear. It took several readings before it was comprehended.

The first paragraph in the results really belongs in the discussion. However it is very important to discuss how you derived that cost figure. Further in that paragraph is a discussion of the 4173 cases. Please breakdown how many were dead, refused to sign, etc. Why were the refuse to sign patients not included?

In the results section, you jump from 9000 cases, to 4173 cases to 409 conditions in 397 cases. This is very confusing. Please be very clear which groups you are describing.

Pg 6 para 1 define observations count. It is not clear what you are doing.

Your methodology leaves room for a lot of bias. It sounds like all the authors agreed on the catagORIZATION however it is not clear how individual cases were assigned to a catagory. Was this done independently by 2 or more reviewers? If so what was the Kappa? Or was this done by a single individual? If so how was this not biased?

Pg 7 para 3 You are discussing the group that had no medical emergency. Who made that assessment - the reviewer or the medic?

Pg 7 para 4 Your discussion starts with the statement that the recorded reasons were inconsistent. However your entire paper is an analysis of these reasons. If they were inconsistent, do you really have a valid study?

Pg 8 para 4 The discussion about inappropriate calls is not well written and confusing.

Table 1 how did you differentiate psychological from social

Table 2 I'd like to see all 6 conditions

Table 4 raises several questions. Is it common for a woman and baby to be left at home in the UK? More importantly what is the protocol for handling intoxicated patients? Are they permitted to refuse transport?

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare I have not competing interests