Reviewer’s report

Title: Postal Survey Methodology To Assess Patient Satisfaction in a Suburban Emergency Medical Services System: an observational study.

Version: 1 Date: 11 August 2006

Reviewer: Isabelle Gasquet

Reviewer’s report:

General

The aim of this article was to evaluate the feasibility of a patient's satisfaction study on one emergency medical service. A questionnaire was delivered by post mail with a prepaid envelope for the response. 857 patients were included for 4 years. The questionnaire comprised 5 closed questions (5 point-likert scale) and 3 open-ended questions. Two types of descriptive results are shown: 1) patient's response rate evolution over time, 2) the distribution of responses to items (including the open-ended questions). The authors concluded to a good feasibility (response rate from 43% the first year to 28% the last year), high level of patient satisfaction with care (from 99% to 100% of the patients) and to the importance of interpersonal communication in patient's satisfaction measurement.

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

There are several major problems with this paper.
1) The results do not answer to the aim. The question of the “feasibility” of a study is a technical question and does not only depend on the response rate.
2) Whatever the response rate is, another interesting question could be the "representativeness" of respondents. The representativeness of the sample studied is necessary to make an estimate of the average opinion of the whole population of patients. Moreover, a response bias may be suspected in this study when looking at the very high satisfaction level of the minority of patients who have given their opinion.
3) No information is given on the questionnaire construction methodology.

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

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests