Reviewer’s report

Title: Deploying a clinical innovation in the context of actor-patient consultations in general practice: A prelude to a formal clinical trial.

Version: 1 Date: 23 January 2009

Reviewer: Mark Harris

Reviewer’s report:

Major Compulsory Revisions
Nil

Minor essential revisions:
The paper could be improved a clearer relationship between the theoretical framework, the methods and findings. The authors make a point of the disruption that can be caused by repeated switching between tasks in the consultation. It is unclear to what extent the LAP detects this as this is more a global measure of consultation performance in the three categories studied used predominantly in medical education. It would be useful for some discussion of other measures of the consultation process such as the Roter and the reasons for selecting the LAP.

Regarding the technical difficulties that occurred in video-taping the consultations, it would be useful to discuss the advantages of using video rather than audio recording of consultations – as the latter is technically easier and less intrusive. Obviously this would not capture the amount of time spent looking at the screen rather than the patient However with the exception of one item detecting “non-verbal cues” the LAP does not seem to capture non verbal activities very well.

The results are not very easy to understand. Why was inter-rater agreement assessed by a Bland-Altman plot rather than using a Kappa or ICC? It would be interesting to include some qualitative data in the results. This might help us to understand why one GPs LAP score decreased.

The discussion and suggestions for improvement to this approach was generally very good. The problem of making the consultations as realistic as possible could have been explored in a little more detail (quite apart from the issue of physical examination). The basis on which the role plays were developed could be described in a little detail (eg were these based on real cases) and there might then be more discussion about how this could be improved.

Discretionary Revisions
Nil

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

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