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.

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Reviewer: Kieran J McGlade

Reviewer's report:

1. This is an interesting and well written paper that makes a significant contribution to the literature with respect to assessing the impact of innovations on practitioner performance in the consultation. In particular the paper describes the execution of an innovative methodological technique to attempt to standardise the conditions under which an innovation is initially assessed in a manner akin to clinical trials of drugs.

2. The main interest of the paper is the description of the technique of using standardised patient actors and standardised conditions to test whether a particular innovation has an impact on practitioner performance. The use of a computerised cancer referral module is of less interest given the likely idiosyncracies of deployment in different health care systems. However this has been used as a useful vehicle to provide context.

3. The modelling has appropriately taken into account possible clustering effects by GP and observer.

4. The authors have discussed the limitations of the study adequately.

5. Page 7, last paragraph, line 3 Typographical error - should read "consultations were not captured...."

6. A number of the references are probably superfluous. For example references 9 and 11 are duplicates. I would suggest that references 8,9,10,11,12 and 14 are probably not required.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare I have no competing interests