Reviewer's report

Title: A qualitative study of patients' views on quality of primary care consultations in Hong Kong

Version: 2 Date: 7 August 2008

Reviewer: John Furler

Reviewer's report:

This is an interpretive qualitative study of the perceptions that patients in Hong Kong have of quality of primary care experiences, where quality is defined as a subjective sense of appropriateness, goodness or meeting expectations.

The research design is appropriate to the research aims and questions, the method appropriate.

The analysis is described as thematic. My feeling is that as qualitative designs gain strength in health research there is a need for greater explicitness and transparency in describing analyses. Clearly "preliminary coding" must have been informed at least in part by a priori ideas and concepts based on the research questions and knowledge of the literature. In relation to the latter, the apparently serendipitous "noticing" that the codes seemed to be similar to many items of the CARE measure must surely have something to do with the fact that one of the investigators has been intimately involved in the development of such a measure. I am not saying that this is bad, simply that it needs to be discussed openly and explicitly, how the investigators brought their existing backgrounds to bear on the data, what concepts they were looking for, and importantly some reference to how they tried to remain sensitive to concepts that departed from this a priori framework, ie a level of analysis that did have a more inductive base. I think further work on this analysis section is needed as a major compulsory revision.

The results section contains a lot of raw data. Following on from this the discussion is essentially a descriptive summation, noting the similarity between these results and results noted in other countries apart from the shared decision making. There is not much attempt to generate any theoretical understanding here, for example (and only as one example) using the cultural context and notions of culturally based identity as a base. As one of the investigators clearly led the development of the CARE Measure, surely the conceptual base of that measure could be brought to bear in generating theoretical insights from this study? I believe that this ought to be addressed through a major compulsory revision.

I have a concern that as a descriptive piece with little theory generation this limits its interest to the locale within which it was undertaken.
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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