Reviewer's report

Title: Effect of a printed reminder in the waiting room to turn off mobile phones during consultation: a before and after study

Version: 2 Date: 17 February 2009

Reviewer: Rohan Jayasuriya

Reviewer's report:

- Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The limitations of the study are not yet well discussed.[ refer to points made earlier]
   a) the authors response relates to response for d) below
   b) agree with the authors that if they asked the patients it would bias the results, mention should be made that the data could have been collected in an exit survey which would have overcome the bias.
   c) the methods section in the revision states" only data from first visits were considered". If that is true, Table 1, provides a different story, as it states that 32% and 29% of the participants were first consultations. A little more clarity is required. Are they first ever visit to the practice (new patients) or first visit during the period of the survey ( both new and old patients). The proportion of new patients in each group should be stated, as that could be a factor to consider.
   d) authors responded: “this is a limitation of before and after studies. We included more details in the manuscript that describe methodological issues. Although a number of factors could have influence the behaviour, most of them were controlled or reported as limitations “.

The point made was that as data on many factors were not collected , statistical difference in the two groups may be due to other factors which were unevenly distributed in the two groups and not due to the intervention. If the authors claim that “ most of them were controlled” then this must be stated in the methods section as “ we controlled for …by…” . Usually control is by design ( randomization) or by analysis. Obviously, it is not by design, then a Chi Square test does not allow control for covariates. Suggest authors consult a statistician to resolve this issue.

2. Accept the explanation, if the literature search did not identify other studies.

3. Authors state “we agree that this is a preliminary investigation with external validity limitations” I think authors need to also state the internal validity limitations, which are more serious.

4. There are many grammatical errors. An editor could help improve the paper.

- Minor Essential Revisions
The authors should improve the discussion. The Beck et al paper is not very central to this study.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

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

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests’