Reviewer's report

Title: Research activity and capacity in primary healthcare: The REACH study: A survey

Version: 3 Date: 10 December 2008

Reviewer: Mieke van Driel

Reviewer's report:

General feedback
This is an interesting study that has been well performed and written. It highlights the current status of research activity and attitude among PHC professionals. It provides baseline data that can assist in further exploring the underlying factors and mechanisms of the shortage of interest and engagement in research. Some considerations for the authors below.

Major revisions
1. The conclusions do not match the results of the study. E.g. the authors mention lack of protected time as the first issue to be addressed, yet this only ranks 8 on the R&D list. The most important issue seems to be access to training and support. The latter is very important (as the respondents indicate) yet it is not mentioned further. There seems to be some bias in the interpretation of the results.

2. The R&D Index may indeed as the authors mention, not be a useful tool. The score cannot differentiate which domain is important. The ranking is much more useful to understand what the needs of the health professionals really are. Page 13 discusses this, however, no reservations are made when drawing conclusions based on this tool. How can the tool be used to identify target groups?

3. How representative is the sample? There is no comparison on other characteristics than profession. Very low response rate!!

4. The authors have not corrected for involvement in training of students/ link with university. This could be an important issue (training opportunities and ongoing support).

5. There is no mention of other activities that are research related, such as journal clubs or EBP meetings within practices.

6. The conclusion (page 13 and abstract) is interpretation, not following from the results.

7. Figure 3 indicates no difference n score between groups?

Minor revisions
8. An interesting finding is that confidence about doing research ranks very low. When working with novice researchers this is often a very important factor. “A
perceived lack of confidence seems to persist” (page 11). Is this a longitudinal study?

9. Any differences between professional groups in ranking?

10. Page 9 interpretation should go to discussion.

11. Page 10: in the discussion new findings are presented (GP least likely to want to learn more). This should be addressed in results if worthwhile to discuss.

12. Discussion has a lot of repetition of results; be concise and to the point.

13. Table 1: what does the p-value refer to?

14. Table 2: differences according to profession?

15. Table 3: can be discussed only in text (table not necessary).

16. figures 1 and 2 not useful.

17. Figure 4: what is the purpose of this figure? It is not helpful in understanding and the text below does not seem to refer to anything.

Recommendation: decide on acceptance after revision

Level of interest: article of limited interest

Quality of English: good

Statistical review: complex description of statistical methods. Please show to a statistician if this is appropriate.

Competing interest: none

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

Competing interest: none