Reviewer's report

Title: The role of general practitioners' burnout in their involvement in patients' mental health problems: a study of videotaped consultations

Version: 1 Date: 3 November 2008

Reviewer: Helen Winefield

Reviewer's report:

BMC submitted ms: Zantinge et al., nov. 3rd 2008.
[GP burnout and involvement in pt mh probs]

Review by Helen Winefield, University of Adelaide.

I have considered your questions 1-9 and my answer is Yes to all of them.

Discretionary revisions

The last sentence of the Abstract trivialises the issues faced by the conscientious but time-pressured GP. It can be interpreted as meaning that GPs who spend time enquiring about patient psychological problems are over-involved and also unskilled; as no information was collected about patient response or feelings of being cared about and supported, including to seek more specialised mental health care, this implication cannot be justified.

It is desirable to explain how GPs were categorised as low, moderate or high in job satisfaction and satisfaction with time. Were the cutoff points based on inspection of the distribution or on an a priori split of the possible range of scores?

The Appendix adds very little that is useful to the paper, with the exception that it shows that satisfaction is highest for the time available with patients. Data relevant to this result could be included in the text and the Appendix omitted.

Table 3 presents means corrected for age and gender of the GP and patients, but it would be of interest to readers to know what the relationships were between GP and patient age and gender, and the independent and dependent variables. This could be added to Table 2.

Minor essential revisions

The first paragraph of the Results section refers to “the appendix to this chapter” – we need a statement by the authors that this paper has not been published elsewhere.

In the Discussion, the 4th paragraph needs to be changed to say “these GPs are less effective in their consultations”
Discussion 5th paragraph last sentence should read “is least caused by dissatisfaction with the available patient time”

Last but one paragraph should read “… plausible to think that GPs and patients influence each other …

Article is of type #3: important in its field

The literature review is comprehensive and the Introduction proceeds in a clear and logical sequence towards appropriate testable hypotheses. The design and measures were good and the sample size, enviable. The results provide evidence for a deeper understanding of GP communication skills than is often presented. They are discussed in a balanced way which makes an original contribution to scientific knowledge in this field.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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