Reviewer’s report

Title: General practitioners and carers: a questionnaire survey of attitudes, awareness of issues, services provided and barriers.

Version: 1 Date: 27 October 2010

Reviewer: Caroline Bulsara

Reviewer’s report:

COMMENTS FOR AUTHORS

Manuscript: General practitioners and carers: a questionnaire survey of attitudes, awareness of issues, services provided and barriers.

Discretionary Revisions

TITLE:

I would suggest that the authors reconsider to a more concise title: eg –
“General practitioners and carers: Attitudes, awareness of issues and the barriers and enablers to provision of services.’

ABSTRACT

• Suggest that authors change ‘important point of contact' to ‘first point of contact’.
• Results – suggest inserting the word ‘total’ before 95 GPs.

BACKGROUND

• 4th paragraph – ‘providing care' needs qualification. E.g ‘providing informal / unpaid' care. Also, would deterioration in health also include ‘psychological health’?

METHODS

• Would suggest that authors also emphasise in SETTING AND METHOD, that only GP responses were included given that the main focus was the GP perception of providing support.
• Questionnaire – line 4 – suggest adding ‘carer specific' before ‘services'. Also, could authors expand on why using closed and open ended questions would capture a more complete picture. I understand why but this needs to be stated. For example, ‘given that GPs could articulate personal perspectives and issues in providing support and care through open ended responses...' or similar.

RESULTS

• Page 9 – did the respondents specify in what ways they took an ‘active role' in supporting carers?
• The second paragraph on page 9 is highly relevant and the crux of the matter in my opinion as to future education and training programs. I would suggest the authors perhaps put this paragraph first here.

• Page 13 – 1st paragraph – final sentence I would suggest adding ‘practical in their approach’ to complete the sentence.

• 2nd paragraph – it would be really useful if the authors could provide a brief recap of the other recommendations for which little progress had been made.

• Page 14 – it would be useful if the authors could provide a brief explanation of what a ‘carer champion’ is?

Minor Essential Revisions

ABSTRACT
• Abstract background – 2nd sentence requires rewrite specifically around the phrase, ‘...and to require support’.

• Avoid using terminology such as ‘close to’ when reporting survey data. It is preferable to use ‘approximately’ and similar more precise terminology.

• Abstract results – ‘...lack confidence in meeting carers’ needs’. Could the ‘needs be briefly noted in a word or two. .g Psychological needs, support needs, educational needs?’

BACKGROUND
• Page 4 – what sorts of demographic changes are expected? Could the authors clarify? Eg An ageing population.

• 3rd paragraph – missing an ‘of’ in sentence, ‘Over half these carers are women...’.

• Page 5 – 2nd paragraph – suggest change term ‘evidence is mixed’ to ‘evidence is inconclusive’.

• Page 5- 5th paragraph – Insert ‘In the UK’, at the commencement of paragraph.

RESULTS
• Page 8 - 2nd paragraph – again replace ‘close to’ with approximately’. Also, sentence is a little clumsy and I would suggest rewording (i.e. ‘previous training in carers’).

• Reasons for attending the workshop – what type of ‘knowledge’ is being sought? Could the authors be more specific? Also advise adding ‘improve provision of services’ rather than just ‘improve services’.

• ‘Two thirds of practices were identified as (replace ‘described’) urban’.

• Page 9 – 3rd paragraph – replace ‘knew this’ with ‘noted that they were aware of this’ and the word ‘about’ with ‘approximately’.

• Page 9 – would it be appropriate to say that ‘all-cause mortality rate is increased’ due to their caregiving role?
• Page 10 – it is customary when reporting survey data to use the term ‘multiple response’ rather than explaining why percentages did not ‘add up to 100%’. Also wording needs revising from ‘participants could give as many answers as they wished’ to ‘Respondents could provide more than one response to open ended questions’.

• I don’t think there is any need for the inclusion of terms such as ‘one in five’ as it doesn’t really lend anything to the findings. I would suggest omitting this from the results.

• Avoid slang terminology such as ‘topped’ the results. Replace with ‘were most often noted..’ or similar phrase with the percentage recorded in brackets afterwards.

• What sorts of problems amongst young carers were reported with education (47%)?

• Again, there is no real need to mention who did not respond. This is relevant for a report but no need for mention in a paper.

• Page 11 – 1st paragraph – were the flu vaccinations offered to carers specifically?

• 2nd paragraph – first sentence not needed as it is not really clear to researchers why the GPs did not respond.

DISCUSSION

• Again, please try to briefly mention why there is likely to be a future increase in numbers of carers.

• There needs to be some form of introduction to the paragraph beginning, ‘The identification of carers remains...’ such as, ‘Key issues to include would be the identification of carers...’ or similar wording. The paragraph doesn’t flow at present and detracts from the important issues being raised by the authors.

• Page 12 – could the authors specify who reported the carer registers – GPs? Respondents?

• All mention of ‘the cared for’ needs replacing with correct terminology – ‘care recipients’ or ‘person being cared for’ as appropriate.

• Page 13 – 1st paragraph – second sentence – what does ‘this’ refer to in ‘expected to offer this’? Suggest replacing with ‘support services’ or similar for clarity.

• 2nd paragraph – when the authors mention ‘flagging notes’ could they specify in regard to what? For example, illness or stress of a carer? Also, to what does ‘information provision’ pertain? Is this regarding the carer as a source of information in regard to the care recipient health?

Major Compulsory Revisions

ABSTRACT

• Authors need to state at the outset that the survey was distributed at the
workshops as this does affect the response rate. At the moment it is only mentioned later in the manuscript.

• Any tables with multiple responses need to be identified as such in brackets after the title of the table without any need for the explanation of percentages not adding up to 100%. This is already usually understood by persons who are familiar with survey data. For example, ‘Table 2: Summary of responses to Likert Scales [multiple response]”. This is all that is required.

**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.