Reviewer's report

Title: Challenges of converting to automatic data collection in the sentinel network of Belgian general practitioners: Results of survey study.

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Reviewer: Arild Faxvaag

Reviewer's report:

This paper reports from a survey among Belgian GPs that are members of a epidemiology surveillance network. Within this network, GP members either belong to a Dutch or a French speaking community. The authors have collected data about the GPs, which EMR systems are in use and how the GPs use their EMR system. The authors found that GPs used a variety of different EMR systems, but that members of the Dutch and the French communities used different systems. Physicians in group practices, members of the Dutch community and younger physicians often used a certified EMR system.

Major Compulsory Revisions

As an exploration in how GPs use their EMR system, the study is rather weak. The introduction is mainly about the benefits and how to arrange for automatic collection and use of healthcare data for epidemiological and other research purposes. The study appear to be about the readiness of Belgian GP practices to deliver healthcare data to a epidemiology network directly from their EMR systems.

In the methods section, there is no mention on how the authors developed and validated the questionnaire. Cronbach’s alpha is about whether a set of items measures a single unidimensional latent construct. How can the authors argue that questionnaire items about GPs recording of home visits, use of prescription module and diagnostic subject headings are about the same latent construct? They are not.

Since the authors seek out to an international audience, the authors should provide more information about the Belgian society and the Belgian healthcare system. Since this study evaluates the use of health information systems, I would advice the authors to follow STARE-HI, a widely accepted guideline for reporting of such studies: http://www.imia.org/endorsed/Stare-HI_as_published.pdf

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests