Reviewer's report

Title: Patient understanding of moles and skin cancer, and factors influencing presentation in primary care: a qualitative study.

Version: 1 Date: 25 May 2010

Reviewer: June Robinson

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The qualitative research reports the results of cognitive interviewing by telephone contact of 40 patients, who participated in the MoleMate trial. The patients either presented with concern over a mole or it was discovered opportunistically by the GP. The analysis is based upon the theoretical framework of the Safer-Andersen model of Total Patient Delay.

The results are presented in narrative form organized around broad themes without an attempt to determine mediation effects or statistical modeling. The themes are not rigorously related to the model as presented in Fig 1. The study uses the first 4 items of the model and does not explain why the last 2 items were not used. Given the limited use of the model, it is difficult to accept the conclusion presented on p16 last paragraph:

Our findings show that the stages are not always passed through successively and independently as suggested by Andersen et al., but that the stages can be merged or omitted altogether.

Recommendations:

1. Provide the structured interview questions in the Methods section.
2. What were the entry criteria and exclusion criteria for the convenience sample?
3. The manuscript seems overly long. Perhaps taking the quotations from patients out of the narrative and creating a table that relates the quotations to the theoretical model would help

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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.