Reviewer's report

Title: Diagnostic scope in out-of-hours primary care services in eight European countries: an observational study

Version: 1 Date: 1 February 2011

Reviewer: David J. Heaney

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting and relevant paper, and the authors should be congratulated for achieving international comparison which is always challenging.

Minor essential revision - it would be good to know who is recording symptoms/diagnosis in each setting a doctor, nurse or other health professional, or telephonist. also is it the patients symptom or the professionals diagnosis, could the authors identify if known or discuss the difference between these.

Discretionary revision - would be for the authors to discuss more fully the link, if any, between the organisational structures, and the diagnosis. it would also be good to include some estimate of demand for the service. if possible eg. if you know the dates of the 1000 calls, say 1 month, and the population served, you should be able to estimate demand per 1000 patients per year. this demand estimate may be related to thresholds for calling services. do the authors have any comments about whether these are similar across countries. if there are no identified links between organisation and presenting symptom, authors should state this.

Is the question posed by the authors well defined? Yes

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described? Yes

3. Are the data sound? the authors describe the issues with data, data are acceptable for purposes of this analysis. some ore detail on the population size and timescale from which the data are drawn

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? yes

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? yes.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated? yes.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished? yes

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? yes.


Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely
related research interests

**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