Reviewer's report

Title: Pain, power and patience - a narrative study of general practitioners' relation to chronic pain patients

Version: 1 Date: 10 November 2010

Reviewer: Michael A Weingarten

Reviewer's report:

This is a beautiful paper. The writers manage to capture real life in GPs' meetings with their patients and their chronic pain. It shows great sympathy for the patients and no less for the doctors trying to cope but often failing. The narrative analysis is careful and honest and the methodology of obtaining the narratives is exemplary. The analysis uses respected theoretical models, most notably those of Labov and Gee, but is helped by them, not limited by them. The justification for using this methodology is thoroughly convincing. It is true that no novel insights have been achieved in this study – it has all been said before, and the authors show their awareness of this in their literature review. But never before have I read so trustworthy an account of the power struggle, the need to persuade, and the dissociation that saves the doctor but abandons the patient, told with such immediate and impelling credibility. Other genres, from questionnaire research to personal accounts, all lack the credibility that this small study has managed to achieve.

I fully recommend publication, but the end of page 12 has escaped the hand of the language editor:

This should be rectified before publication

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest 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'