Reviewer's report

Title: A survey of primary care physician practices in antibiotics prescribing for the treatment of uncomplicated male urethritis.

Version: 1 Date: 28 February 2011

Reviewer: Bart Knottnerus

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Methods, paragraph 3: ‘A scientific committee developed a vignette’. Who were in this committee? How did they develop the vignette?

2. Methods, paragraph 3: ‘A pilot study was conducted with 8 GPs’. How were these 8 GPs selected?

3. Methods, paragraph 5: Apart from ceftriaxone and azitromycine, none of the recommended antibiotics were mentioned in the Background section as first-line treatment. Why are cefixime, spectinomycin and doxycycline considered appropriate as well?

4. Methods, paragraph 8: ‘In addition to the clinical vignette two questions…..completed the survey’. Did GPs have the possibility to change their previously reported treatment plans after having gained the information given by the two final questions?

5. Methods, paragraph 10: ‘At the end of the study……and the responses to the vignette.’ When completing the vignette, were GPs aware that their results would be reported? If yes, may this have influenced their answers?

6. Results/Sample, paragraph 2: ‘The responders were…urban zones (60%)’. Did these characteristics differ from those of the non-responders? A table might be useful to compare characteristics of responders and non-responders.

7. Results/Sample, paragraph 3: ’47 (67%) declared they had not experienced urethritis management’. Did the non-responders give any other reasons?

8. Results/Influence of prescriber factors, paragraphs 1 and 2: Why was the number of practice years dichotomized at 10 and 20 years, respectively? Would the authors also expect a correlation with the outcomes mentioned if practice years were reported on a continuous scale or if other cut-off points had been chosen?

Minor Essential Revisions

9. Abstract, Background: ‘French guidelines eluded fluoroquinolones as a standard treatment for N. gonorrhoeae’. I could not find this in the main text, whereas I think it is essential information (since it may explain the high prescription and resistance rates of ciprofloxacin). I would advise to name it in
the Background or Discussion section and tell since when fluoroquinolones have not been in the guidelines anymore.

10. Background, paragraph 1: ‘Gonococci that are resistant to tetracycline spread globally’. Why is doxycycline recommended then by the scientific committee that developed the vignette?

11. Methods, paragraph 2: ‘a sample of 11% of the non-responders was contacted’. Why was 11% chosen (it would seem more logical to me to choose a round number)?

12. Methods, paragraph 3, title: ‘développement’ should be ‘development’

13. Results/Antimicrobial agents used, paragraph 1: ‘Table 2’ should be ‘Table 1’.

14. Discussion/Limitations: ‘such a participation rate is in the range obtained for most surveys conducted in general practice’. To me, this is not a very convincing excuse for the low response rate. Therefore, I would rather omit it.

15. Discussion/Limitations: ‘GPs who participated in this study might be more concerned about urethritis than non-responders, as shown by the non-responders answers’. What answers are being referred to?

16. Discussion/Limitations: ‘we found no differences in the demographic data between responders and non-responders’. I would prefer to see this in a table.

17. Discussion/Implications, paragraph 1: ‘in view of the possibility….ceftriaxone and cefixime antibiotics’. This seems contradictory to ceftriaxone and cefixime being considered appropriate treatments in the vignette: whereas I thought they were recommended as first-line antibiotics, this sentence makes me doubt that recommendation. Please clarify what is being meant.

Discretionary Revisions

18. Title: ‘Urethritis’ might be specified to ‘gonococcal urethritis’, as is done in the last sentence of the Background section.


20. Background, last sentence: not completely consistent with title (see comment 18)

21. Table 1: Few GPs seemed to prescribe an antibiotic against Chlamydia trachomatis. Could that be explained?

22. Table 1: Since 95% confidence intervals are given for the odds ratios, reporting p-values does not add any information in my opinion. Therefore I would omit it.

Level of interest: An article of importance 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.