Reviewer's report

Title: Diagnosing delirium in Thai elderly by family physicians: The utilization of CAM algorithm

Version: 1 Date: 4 February 2011

Reviewer: Allan House

Reviewer's report:

This paper is brief and to the point. It shows that it is possible to train family physicians to use a standardised delirium measure so that they can diagnose delirium accurately - as judged by consultant psychiatrists using widely available diagnostic criteria. There are a number of features of the study that make this finding a little difficult to interpret:-

It isn't clear who the family physicians were, where they came from. Are they typical? One doubts it given the time they devoted to this research. Why did they participate? The answer will influence our views on generalisability.

The training was quite intensive - one would be surprised if it did not lead to skills in identifying the target disorder. So the question is: would the trainees have done just as well using clinical judgement after the training as they did using the CAM? In other words, was it the CAM-specific training or the clinical training that was the effective ingredient?

The context will have flattered the performance. They were testing diagnostic skills in an acute medical setting where 25% of the participants had dementia and 50% were delirious, so priors will have been high and the clinicians will have been on the alert. One wouldn't expect such accuracy in routine practice.

It isn't clear what the purpose is. The authors haven't shown that CAM can be used (or would be used) in family practice or in routine general hospital practice. Is this a precursor to a research study on delirium? In which case why isn't it just published as part of the bigger work?

Level of interest: An article of insufficient interest to warrant publication in a scientific/medical journal

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'