Reviewer's report

Title: Framework and indicator testing protocol for developing and piloting quality indicators for the UK Quality and Outcomes Framework

Version: 1 Date: 6 June 2011

Reviewer: Christopher Millett

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I only have the following minor comments:

1- In the methods section. The description of the stages doesn’t match the diagram. Stage 1 in the diagram is the collation of information but in the text it is the indicator development stage.

2- The authors do mention the piloting period as one of the limitations. It would be helpful if they could expand on this point in more detail.

3- The authors don’t explain fully how they assessed any unintended consequences? Have they used a specific framework to examine the potential of any unintended consequences? Were they concerned with specific consequences?

4- The authors state “The indicator testing protocol we are advocating in this paper codifies existing experience in this area and proposes a testing protocol using a 6 month piloting timeframe.”

If the authors were permitted an extended time frame, what changes would they make to the protocol?

5- It is not clear whether piloting included the provision of any financial incentives for indicator achievement. If not, then the authors need to describe how this process of assigning points / ££ is taken forward (presumably as part of negotiations with GPC) and highlight this as a major limitation of the piloting process i.e. it provides no information about how practices respond to a given financial incentive for a quality indicator.

6- The claim that “This indicator testing protocol is proposed as a foundation for the development of an internationally accepted field testing methodology” appears to be overstating the case given the extensive work done by others in quality indicator development and testing (albeit not always attached to P4P programmes).

7- In the introduction, the authors state: - "Measures must also be 100% under the direct control of those being assessed". This is not the case for most intermediate outcome measures i.e. HbA1c control

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Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
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