Reviewer's report

Title: Title: Patient perceptions of innovative longitudinal integrated clerkships based in regional, rural and remote primary care: a qualitative study

Version: 1 Date: 11 March 2012

Reviewer: Peter Coventry

Reviewer's report:

This is a well written paper that is interesting and contributes to the existing literature on undergraduate placements in primary care settings. The authors place their work in the context of previous research well, and make interesting suggestions for future research. My suggestions below are all in the category of discretionary revisions, but I strongly suggest that the revisions about the justification of methodology are considered:

1. The use of collective case study methodology should be justified over other qualitative methodologies. Yin's approach concentrates on "how and why" questions and incorporates the use of propositions, as the authors have done, but in the text there is reference to "an exploration of patient perceptions" - something that could be achieved by other methodologies encompassing the semi-structured interviews that were used. This isn't to say that it is an inappropriate method, more that it should be explicitly justified.

2. If possible there should be explicit consideration of contrary data.

3. It would be useful to have a reference explaining the definitions of "regional, rural and remote". I am aware of several classification systems e.g. as discussed in Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2004. Rural, regional and remote health: a guide to remoteness classifications. AIHW cat. no. PHE 53. Canberra: AIHW.

4. There should be a fuller discussion of the limitations of the study - e.g. the minimum of 3 patient perspectives from each context (and there should be a justification for the number of participants), as well as a more balanced discussion of the role of the researcher (someone who has managed the initiative may have a different stance compared with an external researcher - this would include the positive aspect described by the authors). The line "the researcher took care to collect data free from her own values" invites the question "how did she do this?" The inter-context comparisons should really be phrased quite cautiously because of the limited number of cases.

5. In the introduction the third proposition (clerkship patients have a positive impact on patients' healthcare) does not seem to be fully supported by the preceding text - perhaps the supporting evidence could be strengthened or the wording of the proposition changed slightly to emphasise that the evidence quoted is about one particular aspect of healthcare viz.. patient satisfaction?

6. In defining the cases it would be interesting to know how many students were
involved—did each of the 13 patients see a different student, or did several see the same student?

**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