Reviewer's report

Title: Addressing the deficiencies in the evidence-base for primary practice in regional Australia - Sentinel Practices Data Sourcing (SPDS) Project: A Pilot Study

Version: 2  Date: 2 June 2013

Reviewer: Richard Birtwhistle

Reviewer's report:

The authors have nicely described the recent changes in primary care organization in Australia (despite all the acronyms) and outlined the argument for the need for health data for use in local health care planning and to understand population health.

What the authors are doing is an important development in general practice for managing chronic disease at the practice population level rather than patient by patient.

Major Compulsory Revisions

I have several questions that are fundamental to using EMR data for epidemiological purposes.

1. How valid are the case finding algorithms? There is some faith by the authors that the case finding algorithms used in the PCS CAT are valid but provide no published evidence that they are. How do they know that those identified with diabetes as an example actually have the disease? How many diabetics were missed because diabetes was not recorded in a part of the EMR that was accessible to extraction? How many patients with prediabetes were diagnosed by the program as having diabetes?

2. How was the denominator estimated for calculation of prevalence?

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Figure 5 is difficult to read and the data could be displayed graphically in other ways that would be easier to interpret.

Discretionary Revisions

1. I do not think that the issue of lost revenue from missing preventive health checks adds anything to the paper.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable
**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests