Reviewer's report

Title: Organisational targets of patient safety improvement programs in primary care; an international web-based survey

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Reviewer: Gerard Bury

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An interesting and important paper which may stimulate discussion in the international debate on safety in primary care. Some points require clarification:

1. The purposive sample of participants is small and has a low response rate, although representing a very wide range of countries and health systems. The sample appears to be drawn from a limited pool of those known to or working with the authors of the paper/Linneaus project. It would be useful to expand the description of this population and the reasons for its selection.

2. What are EPA safety indicators? What definition of patient safety was used?

3. The study questionnaire appears to be drawn from earlier, related publications by the group but the rationale for inclusion of some items but not others is not described. The questionnaire does not appear to have been validated. Comments on these potential weaknesses would be useful.

4. Was the questionnaire circulated in one or more languages? If translated, how were translation issues addressed?

5. Given the international nature of the work, is it possible that the questionnaire addressed mainly or only those items with 'international portability' rather than those which are truly important? To be clearer, the very different health systems involved might be a disincentive to involve complex or local key issues (e.g. CPD systems, registration structures, specific regional health problems etc).

6. Did the questionnaire provide respondents with the opportunity to nominate their own items of importance? If not, the authors should explain the reasons and the limitations on the validity of the study which may be created.

7. The discussion is limited. Some reflection on issues which attract low scores might be useful.

8. Much of the international literature on patient safety emphasises the importance of participation by patients and representatives in establishing safety systems. The authors include no lay respondents and do not address this issue in the discussion. The issue should be explored - presumably, there is acknowledgement that such input is important for general practice.

9. Some language issues should be addressed.
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' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.