Reviewer’s report

Title: Inter-contact interval based views on frequent attenders in primary care

Version: 2 Date: 30 July 2013

Reviewer: Sue Kirby

Reviewer’s report:

Minor Essential Revisions

Review of Manuscript:

“Inter-contact interval based views on frequent attenders in primary care” by Johannes Hauswaldt, Wolfgang Himmel and Eva Hummers-Pradier

Thank you for the opportunity to review this interesting article. As requested my comments on the points listed in your instructions to reviewers are detailed below.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?

The research question is clearly defined in the abstract: ‘[T]o develop a purely contact-based definition of “frequent attendance” and to apply it to real patients’ and at the end of the Introduction: ‘[T]he aim of this study was to develop an inter-contact time measure, intending a new definition of “frequent attendance” and “frequent attenders”. In a second step, this measure was applied to real patients, focusing on their disease profile as well as the services they requested, and the results were compared with those achieved by traditional measures of frequent attendance.’ In summary, the question is well defined.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?

The methods adopted are appropriate in terms of the statistical analysis and are clearly described. The description of the methods is easy to understand and their use is justified.

3. Are the data sound?

The description of the data collection is sound.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?

Yes, the manuscript conforms to the appropriate standards of reporting and data deposition and is described in ‘Data extraction and preparation for analysis’ lines 147 to 164.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

Yes, I believe the discussion and conclusion are supported by the data and the
interpretation of the clinical significance of the data to be sound.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
Yes (lines 277 to 306) limitations are adequate and clearly described.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
Yes in the section entitled ‘Comparison with existing literature’ and in the boxed paragraph ‘How this fits’. The reader is able to place the study in the field of literature and understand the relevance.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
The title could be amended to reflect the recommendation that the ICI be adopted as a new definition of frequent attendances, as this seems to be the main thrust of the work. See Aim of the Abstract: ‘To develop a purely contact-based definition of “frequent attendance” and to apply it to real patients.’

9. Is the writing acceptable?
The writing is clear and concise. My detailed comments are:

• Suggest amend ‘had more often’ to ‘were more likely to have’ line 66, 68 and 69.
• Line 76 not sure what is meant by ‘derestricts’ – can another word be used?
• Suggest delete ‘In a rather time consuming step’ line 154.
• Line 280 I was puzzled by the use of the term ‘compulsive diagnoses’ I am not sure what is meant
• Suggest delete ‘enough’ from the end of line 280.
Perhaps these points could be clarified.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests