Reviewer's report

Title: Multiple perspectives on symptom interpretation in primary care research

Version: 2 Date: 14 August 2013

Reviewer: Jean-Marie Degryse

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Minor Essential Revisions.

1. In the section of the anthropological perspectives on symptoms, reference to the work of one of pioneers in this field Cecil Helman seems indicated (e.g. to his book Culture, Health, and Illness or some of this articles

2. In the same section: a paragraph / note on the what is knows in medical anthropology as the "ethnomedical" perspective would be appropriate (ethnomedicine = the implicit culture system of values and significance that is given to symptoms(disease and illness) within a particular cultural group).

Discretionary Revisions

P6 Symptom nature and appearance:
May I suggest to make reference to the Baysian logic that underpins clinical epidemiological reasoning.

P7 third paragraph "When Gps face....) : a nice example to illustrate things is the way the "seriousness" of a common complaint as "cough" is measured/approached (Lecompte Sophie et al. Validated methods of cough assessment: a systematic review of the literature. Respiration 2011;81:161-74.

P9 last paragraph and P10 first sentence: one or more references are lacking to support such strong statement. ("However growint evidence suggests..."


In the discussion section maybe a separate paragraph might be dedicate to the way "symptom scores" are embedded in Quality of Life Questionnaires that are very popular. Most of them contain indicator items next to causal items (Feyers and Machin 2007)

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