Reviewer's report

Title: Chronic-disease patients and their use of Out-Of-Hours primary healthcare: a cohort study

Version: 1  Date: 25 April 2014

Reviewer: Nils Schneider

Reviewer's report:

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Thank you for the opportunity to review this interesting and, in my view, relevant research paper.

The authors present the results of a cross-sectional study on the use of out-of-hour primary healthcare services in Denmark. The random sample consisted of 13,930 patients who had used the OOH services, of which a third (N=4,893) had at least one chronic disease (psychiatric diagnoses, lung or chronic heart disease, diabetes, cancer). The most frequent single diagnose was lung disease. The proportion of calls completed by a telephone consultation was highest for patients with psychiatric diseases, so that these patients, compared to other patient groups, were less often referred to a face-face encounter. Referrals to hospital were most frequently due to acute health problems resulting from heart disease.

- Major Compulsory Revisions
1. The discussion considers relevant international studies but I miss implications for practice and / or policy. How can the findings help to optimize primary care?
- Minor Essential Revisions
2. The study background and setting could be more informative so that international readers learn more about the relevant health care structure in Denmark. The authors describe that GPs offer primary care during office hours for their listed patients and after hours in regionally based OOH organizations. I would appreciate further details concerning the OOH organisations, e.g. patient fee, team structure (GPs, nurses, other professionals), electronic data management between GP offices and OOH organization (e.g. availability of recent blood tests, X-ray or medication plans?)
3. Page 9: "95.5 (?) of all 8-hour duty periods" – please check
4. The descriptive statistics (percentages with confidence intervals) are adequate. However, one question remains: What is the percentage number of the random sampled contacts to the total number of contacts?

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