Reviewer's report

Title: Waiting to see the specialist: Patient and provider characteristics of wait times from Primary to Specialty Care.

Version: 1 Date: 24 November 2013

Reviewer: Aloysius Niroshan Siriwardena

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Major compulsory revisions
1. Background: The following sentence is confusing - it would be better to state Lower or higher patient socioeconomic status and then one of these assertions is likely to be incorrect: “Patient socioeconomic status has been associated with less access to specialist care [8-14] and lower wait times [15,16]”

2. The word ‘is’ is missing from the following: However, extracting complete and accurate referral information from existing EMRs is challenging and similar work at a provincial or federal level is lacking.38-40

3. Data should be plural, e.g. Across Canada, administrative data has have been used extensively.

4. The study objectives were: 1) to calculate wait times from when a referral is made by a FP to when a patient sees a medical or surgical consultant, and 2) to examine patient and provider factors related to these wait times.

5. The authors used an administrative database and referral letters to extract data on referrals made in 2008, wait times and patient (sex, age, socioeconomic status, comorbidity, continuity of care), and family physician (FP) factors (sex, age, primary care model, patient list size) that might affect wait times for referral from a FP to a specialist.

6. Johns Hopkins Adjusted Clinical Group (ACG) case-mix system was used as a measure of patient acuity/comorbidity. The authors do not include FP assessment of acuity or urgency or the particular diagnostic condition, e.g. suspected cancer, for which the patient had been referred but this would be essential to account for case mix and acuity. Wait times are critically dependent on the reason for and urgency of referral which are not included in the analysis. This limitation is touched on in the discussion.

7. The limitations above need to be discussed in more detail.

Level of interest: An article of insufficient interest to warrant publication in a scientific/medical journal

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: No.