Reviewer's report

Title: The inter-observer agreement of examining pre-school children with acute cough: a nested study.

Version: 1 Date: 24 December 2003

Reviewer: Alyn H Morice

Reviewer's report:

General
A well written manuscript. Results are what one would expect, but the design has created problems.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
Commentary needs to be made on the difference in pyrexia recording. This is not observer limited - the recording is above 35.5 or not. What this paper says to me is that their method is so inaccurate it should be abandoned particularly as the authors claim in an unpublished and unseen (by me) paper that this has prognostic implications.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
Is there not a problem with an order effect? The child was always examined by observer 2 second. Respiratory rate etc may have been altered purely by the time element. There is no internal standard ie we do not know how reproducible intra observer examination is never mind inter observer. Commentary on these points is required.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

none