Reviewer's report

Title: German ambulatory care physicians' perspectives on evidence based medicine - a national survey

Version: 1 Date: 13 March 2006

Reviewer: Stefan Sauerland

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General
This is a well-conducted survey on the acceptance of EBM by physicians in Germany. Since the sample is representative of German ambulatory care physicians, the validity of the results is high. The importance of the findings is also high, especially for guideline developers.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
1. The overall response rate needs to be reported. Otherwise, the study's potential for response bias can not be understood. Please describe how many physicians were selected for phone interviews, how many were successfully reached by phone, and how many were willing to respond to the questionnaire.
2. On page 7, ANOVA is described for statistical comparisons between two groups. However, ANOVA is suitable for comparing three or more groups, whereas Student's t-test is common standard for groupwise comparisons. The authors fail to mention the t-test although they are using it.
3. Also on page 7, a factor analysis is mentioned, but without giving any details. Since factor analysis is a quite complex statistical procedure, a few more words seem justified.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
4. Instead of using the asterisk for indicating which authors contributed equally to the manuscript, one simple sentence would be sufficient as footnote: "All authors contributed equally to this work."
5. In the abstract, mentioning of statistical software usage is unwarranted.
6. It would sound better in the abstract, if exact percentages were reported rather than saying "approximately 50%". The same problem can be found on p.9, line 4.
7. In the abstract's conclusion, the first sentence is unclear. I would suggest to delete the words "which is", thus stating that "a large group remains opposed to the practice of EBM".
8. Please define the plus/minus sign as indicator of standard deviation in the methods section.
9. On top of page 9, average case load is said to be 1200 and 1400 patients. However, these round numbers apparently are median rather than mean values.
10. The labels in figure 7 do not correspond with the sequence of questions in part 4 of the questionnaire as shown in Table 1.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
11. It should be mentioned, whether physicians received a honorarium for survey participation.
12. Recently performed similar surveys need to be discussed. Please refer to: Heymans L, Kirchner H, Ollenschläger G. Einschätzungen und Erwartungen deutscher Hausärzte gegenüber evidenzbasierten Leitlinien. In: Evaluation 2006. 2006 March 6-9, Bochum, Deutschland.
It would be interesting to know, which specialties (shown in table 3) were most reluctant to use EBM.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: No
Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.