Reviewer's report

Title: General practitioner practices in requesting laboratory tests for patients with gastroenteritis in the Netherlands, 2001-2002

Version: 3 Date: 28 July 2006

Reviewer: ron winkens

Reviewer's report:

General

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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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)

The authors have clarified the reasons for performing the study. One reason is to make it easier to interpret surveillance data (line 5 and 6 on page 4). As such, this reason is clear. Perhaps the authors could explain in the discussion what they have learned additionally?

In the last sentence of the background, it is suggested that the guidelines probably need revision. I suggest to put it more cautious, in terms of “possibly need revision.”

In the results, I suggest to delete the phrases on page 8 concerning sex differences. In my view, the relevance is poor and the remarks are not supported by data. Also, the remark “borderline significant” on page 9 should be removed.

In the discussion the authors recommend testing for rotavirus during the winter season. I think we should be careful in promoting this. Guidelines might give recommendations for specific situations, thus preventing a widespread (and unbridled) use of this test in every person with diarrhoea. In the last section on page 14, the authors should pay attention to a strict separation of the aspect of non-adherence and the need for better implementation of the guideline versus the aspect of the quality of the information in the guideline. The results show a poor adherence to the guidelines, irrespective of the fact that the guidelines may not be up to date.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

No competing interests