Reviewer's report

Title: Implementing referral guidelines: Lessons from a negative outcome cluster randomised factorial trial in general practice ISRCTN10184669

Version: 3 Date: 25 October 2006

Reviewer: David Cade

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General
Some helpful comments have now been included in the discussion but are rather “coded”. The software was not taken up because it created work for GPs (and time costs money) and there was no benefit for patient or practice i.e. directing patients straight to test. Also extra work can be covered by Practice Nurses as alluded to but mention of other methods to collect clinical data, eg via the patients themselves, should form part of the discussion as this is a major block to the introduction of electronic decision support mechanisms. The authors are aware of what can be achieved in other settings. This is not “speculating beyond the results” but enhancing the discussion.

Did the software identify patients accurately who fulfil the criteria for the TWR?

I think the paper should be published though I think it would be more valuable and more accurately reflect the title if the above comments were acted upon.

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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)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)