Reviewer's report

Title: Quality of interaction between primary health-care providers and patients with type 2 diabetes in Oman: An observational study

Version: 1 Date: 19 July 2006

Reviewer: Stephen Mauerbach

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)

1. A major limitation is that all observations were made by a single individual and this individual (being the principal investigator) cannot be considered to be an independent and unbiased observer. Studies using observational ratings typically employ at least two independent observers who are trained in the observational system and who reach an acceptable level of interobserver reliability before providing ratings for the study. The authors state that the consultations were tape recorded. They do not say whether the ratings that are reported were based on live observations or on the tape recordings nor whether they were audio or video recordings. In any case, if tapes are available they can be used to obtain ratings from independent observers. The interobserver reliability coefficient should be reported and whose ratings are used (e.g., the mean of two observers) should be reported.

2. The authors need to operationalize the criteria used for making ratings. For example, what behaviors constitute a "warm welcoming?" or a "warm farewell"; what behaviors were indicants of "gestures to continue"? Similarly, what were the specific criteria used for determining whether nurses provided adequate education on diabetes? These criteria should be spelled out for raters prior to making ratings and establishing reliability. It is also important to do this so that other researchers, if they so desire, can use the rating scales in the same way as the present researchers.

3. It would be of interest to present data on whether doctors' behavior varied as a function of nationality, age, work experience, and whether they had specialty training in diabetes management.

4. The authors need to emphasize more strongly that the study is exploratory. They are using a specially constructed set of rating scales with no established validity and, as it now stands, no reliability data. They should also note that the generalizability of the findings need to be explored. These data were collected from one region of Oman. They should discuss other findings indicating that data consistent with theirs have been obtained in other settings, or if they cannot do so they should note that it is yet to be established whether similar findings would be obtained elsewhere.

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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)

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

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.