Reviewer's report

Title: Setting directions for capacity building in primary health care: a survey of a research network

Version: 1 Date: 15 October 2005

Reviewer: Jane Gunn

Reviewer's report:

General
1. Thank-you for the opportunity to review this original article relating to a South Australian Research Network. Research networks are increasing in number in primary care and it is excellent to see networks submitting data about themselves for publication.
2. The submitted article is clearly written and contributes information about the self-reported research capacity of SARNet members. I think it could be made shorter without losing meaning.
3. Unfortunately, the response rate to the survey was low, however the authors include some interesting techniques for surveying members (the research spider the categories of research activity) that would be of interest to other networks considering undertaking a similar study.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
4. It would be helpful to have the aims and objectives of SARnet stated clearly and to explain how the developed survey of members addressed these aims and objectives. Did the survey address all the aims or some? Explain what you mean by a 'whole system' approach.
5. The sample size calculations for the survey should be stated. What were the pre-specified hypothesis for this study? Did you end up with the power required to investigate these?
6. The methods used to distribute the survey should be stated in enough detail to allow others to repeat exactly what you did. What follow-up approach did you use? Was this based on the evidence about achieving good response rates from surveys of professionals? Did you use any incentives? Tell the reader exactly what you did.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
7. It would be helpful to have a table that compared the respondents to the non-respondents - on profession, sex and location of practice if possible. This would replace the pie chart. If this is not possible a bar graph would be more appropriate than a pie chart for showing the respondents discipline.
8. Please include confidence intervals and standard deviations as appropriate to assist the reader with interpreting the results.
9. Limitations of your approach should be made clear in the discussion. A response rate of 40% must have been disappointing. What does this response rate say about the success of the network?

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
10. It would be interesting to know what you have done based on these findings? What the network co-ordinators have learnt through doing this? It would be worthwhile including things you would do differently or suggest that others consider.

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 am involved in the PHCRED initiative mentioned in the article. My involvement is as a Director in another State. The university that employs me has received funding from the Commonwealth Department that funds the group who have submitted this paper. The group are known to me.