Reviewer's report

Title: A before and after study of the impact of academic detailing on the use of diagnostic imaging for shoulder complaints in general practice.

Version: 3 Date: 8 December 2006

Reviewer: Ansgar Espeland

Reviewer's report:

General

The manuscript describing this important study is improved but I think it needs some further revisions, as some of my previous comments are insufficiently addressed. I am unable to advice acceptance of the manuscript until the author has responded to my comments below, but I will later advice acceptance if the response is adequate.

The paper needs to be seen by an expert statistician because this reviewer has insufficient knowledge of statistical methods used.

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

These are marked MA in the review below.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

These are marked MI in the review below.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

No such revisions are suggested.

Specific comments

1. Some linguistic / editing corrections are needed. MI
   Abstract: "General Practitioners use of" (line 2) should be "General Practitioners’ use of", and "GPs knowledge" (second last line) should be "GPs’ knowledge".
   Introduction, second last line: "...Detailing to GP’s" should be "...Detailing to GPs".
   First paragraph of Discussion, page 11, line 6: "...these GP’s had" should be "...these GPs had".
   Define MSK when first mentioned (page 12-13), or spell it out the few times it is used.
   References must be checked, for example, journal is not stated in reference 7.

2. Introduction, page 5, paragraph 2, last sentence ("Again there was..."). In response to comment 18 in my previous review, the author states that "this... has been deleted". However, the sentence is unchanged in the revised manuscript. The author should either delete the sentence or rewrite it to clarify its meaning, cf. my previous comment 18. MI

3. Methods, page 7, line 1: ("An evidence-based outline for shoulder imaging"): The author states (comment 19) that "The guidelines were a consensus of 6 orthopaedic surgeons" and no references are given to support the guideline / outline. If it was consensus-based rather than evidence-based, this should be stated, e.g, "A guideline for shoulder imaging developed in consensus by six orthopaedic surgeons (Appendix I)". If it was evidence-based then this should be documented and reference(s) given to the evidence (primary research, systematic reviews, or other evidence) - or to a document summarising the evidence. MA
4. Methods, page 8, second last line: "...after time 3)" should be "after time period 3". MI

5. Discussion, page 12, paragraph 3: I do not understand the last sentence, which has been changed in response to my previous comment 47. It should be rewritten or preferably deleted, in which case the first sentence in paragraph 3 ("Guidelines for managing...") can be moved to the start of paragraph 4. MI

6. That GPs in Australia are unable to order MRI should be mentioned somewhere in the manuscript, for example at the end of paragraph 3 in Introduction, page 4. This would explain why MRI, commonly used in many countries, was not considered in this study. MI

7. Discussion, Limitations of the study, page 12-13: The author states (comment 48) that the discussion has been expanded and that an amendment is made, but I cannot find any such changes. This should be corrected, for example by inserting "A second limitation is that we did not evaluate whether our intervention actually made the use of imaging more appropriate according to the guideline" prior to "A final limitation..." and by deleting the final sentence ("A randomised..."). MA

8. Table 2: According to my previous comment 52 the number attached to footnote 2 has been removed, but "NS = not significant" should remain in the footnote. MI

9. Appendix II: The author states (comment 54) "Amended as suggested" (which was to provide the best answer for each question) but no changes can be found. This could be corrected. MI

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: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.