Reviewer's report

Title: General Practitioners involvement in Enteral Tube Feeding at home: a qualitative study

Version: 1 Date: 16 November 2006

Reviewer: Stephen Barclay

Reviewer's report:

General

I read this paper with interest: although the average practice has few patients with HETF, as the authors point out, these are a vulnerable group of patients who may feel very insecure on discharge home. So the subject area is an important one.

The qualitative approach used was entirely appropriate for the research questions, although the sample was not a purposive one as described in the Abstract. The Methods section description is more of a convenience sample of all GPs who were willing to be interviewed and had experience of HETF. It sounds as though 6 of these subsequently declined. Were the GPs offered any financial remuneration for their time? The final sample size of 25 was apropriate.

It is good to see evidence of checking of intercoder analysis, but perhaps a little disappointing that this was only undertaken on two transcripts. Deviant cases were sought.

The results are clearly presented and give a clear and coherent account of the issues from the GPs' perspectives. Might a future study also include the perspectives of District Nurses, patients and carers? In the area of England where I practice, such patients are under the care of a hospital outreach parenteral nutrition team who visit regularly to assess the patient and are usually the first contact point when difficulties arise. If there is no such arrangement in Northern Ireland, then I can indeed understand some of the strong opinions expressed by the GPs! They are indeed being "dumped on"! Is there any literature concerning the support arrangements across the UK? I wonder if my area may not be fairly typical of the current position, which makes the Northern Ireland experience rather atypical. It would be important for the authors to comment on this issue, as it will have a major influence on the generalisability of the study.

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

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

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

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

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests'