Reviewer’s report

Title: The Frequency of Missed Test Results and Associated Treatment Delays in a Highly Computerized Health System

Version: 2 Date: 3 March 2007

Reviewer: Mark Graber

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)

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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)

Appendix 1: Please clarify what the "%" refers to, or, better, provide the actual summarized answers to the question

p6: Readers not familiar with the VA system would benefit from a description of the 'in box ' options to receive lab tests. Also, on P9, it should be clarified that some of the options for lab follow-up involve the 'in box ' alert options, and others do not.

The process for survey development and testing is described somewhat differently on p7 vs p 11

Please fix the sentence on P5 "Indeed these studies have demonstrated that clinically important test results are common".

Suggest renaming "common clinical pathology" tests to "clinical laboratory tests" in Figure 2 and p12.

Limitations: Suggest explictly mentioning that the results depend on the recall of the provider. It should also be mentioned that 'delayed' and 'missed' are not explicitly defined on the survey, so providers may vary in how they defined these terms, and what cases they reported in these categories. If a provider usually checks all the ordered tests the next day, but this gets delayed until the day after that, would such a test be reported as delayed or missed ?

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Including data on the 'diversion' issue (primary care providers feel like they are doing the follow-up work of specialists) seems irrelevant and a bit of a distraction to the main focus on the paper on diagnostic errors.

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, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.