Reviewer's report

Title: Diagnostic labelling and other GP characteristics as determinants of antibiotic prescribing for acute respiratory tract episodes

Version: 1 Date: 17 April 2007

Reviewer: an A de sutter

Reviewer's report:

General

This is an interesting study carried out on an impressive database. It was already known that the use of certain diagnostic labels is associated with more antibiotic prescriptions regardless of the clinical picture. In this paper the authors show that this association is independent of the incidence of ART episodes.

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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)

The research question in this paper is rather complicatedly formulated and could probably be reformulated in a more simple way. I also find the used terminology a bit confusing. "Volume of prescribing" could maybe be replace by "tendency to prescribe" which expresses better what is meant. It would also maybe be more accurate if "incidence of ART episodes presented to the GP" was used and not the more general "incidence of ART episode".

- p6 last sentence "assuming the variation of the incidence of ART infections among practices is rather zero.." I think the authors meant to say that the distribution of the various kinds of infections is the same in different practice so that differences in labelling can be considered as a characteristic of the GP or practice, but as this "incidence" (meaning the total number of ART) is also used as one of the determinants of antibiotic prescribing this is rather confusing

- "inclination to prescribe new drugs": is this self rated?

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential 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, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'