Reviewer's report

Title: Defining frequent attendance in an average general practice: a validation study

Version: 3 Date: 8 November 2007

Reviewer: Moyez Jiwa

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)

I am not sure the title is helpful. What is an 'average' general practice?

I read this paper several times before I thought I understood what the authors were trying to do. The introduction could be much more explicit. There are several terms or phrases that may have been used for brevity but do not help the reader. For example what is meant by 'inadequate use of healthcare' in the first paragraph. In the third paragraph the team writes about 'small' age groups. What are they? In a relatively brief paper it was unhelpful to have to read back over these sentences as their meaning becomes clearer as you proceed through the paper.

Secondly in an international journal it is important to offer some detail on how primary care is organised where the study was conducted. I feel I have some understanding of the system having worked in the UK but colleagues elsewhere may struggle to contextualise the work. Therefore I recommend penning a succinct paragraph describing the Dutch primary health care system. Also it would be helpful to say why it is important to identify the FAs. I am not aware of much literature that suggests that it may be possible to tackle FA consultation behaviour with any efficient intervention. If such literature exists it should be cited.

I was disappointed in the conclusion to this study. The authors don't seem to have offered an advance in our understanding of the issues and conclude, like most researchers before them, that standardisation of definitions would be helpful. This was a weak conclusion. The study offers more than this, it was a systematic review of different methods of identifying specific patients. What would be helpful, and I suspect they have the data to tell us, is which FAs are not identified by the simplest, i.e. three group method.
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?:** Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'