Reviewer’s report

Title: The accuracy of the MMSE in detecting cognitive impairment when administered by general practitioners

Version: 1 Date: 17 December 2007

Reviewer: howard fillit

Reviewer’s report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?
While the question is not new, it is relevant and important.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?
I believe there are some problems with the methods. While the authors state they are testing the accuracy of general practitioners to conduct an MMSE in practice, in fact, the GPs in this study underwent a training session. Thus the GPs in this study do not represent the general community. In addition, there is potential selection bias in the way that the patients were chosen for the study (page 5 second paragraph). The GPs also used a "standardized questionnaire" (not identified) to collect data. Finally, the followup visit at the UVA was 2 to 6 months later. Thus, patients may have significantly changed in the mental status in this interim.

3. Are the data sound and well controlled?
Generally yes. It is a bit confusing that 26.5% of cases with suspected cognitive impairment were not confirmed by the UVA.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
Yes

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
Paragraph 2 in discussion, bottom page 10: the MMSE was not designed to detect patients with MCI.

There is no discussion of WHY there were differences in the scores of the GPs and the UVA. What are the GPs doing right, or wrong? No speculation on the impact of the difference in timing, site of administration, person of administration, time of administration and other variables that might account for the findings.

6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
I might change the word "detecting" in the title to: "confirming"

7. Is the writing acceptable? YES