Reviewer's report

Title: Mix of methods is needed to identify adverse events in general practice: a prospective observational study

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Reviewer: Graham Neale

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This is an interesting small study on the identification of adverse events in general practice.

Major essential revision

The authors use an unconventional definition of adverse event (AE). I think that it would be useful to separate events that caused harm (AEs) from those that might have caused harm - potential AEs (PAE) - and to categorise these for each method.

Similarly readers would be interested to know more about the nature of the incidents – the authors provide these in some detail only for patient-reported incidents. Perhaps the results might be tabulated. In particular it might be possible to separate issues of safety (and especially describe nature of serious events) from those of quality e.g. ‘lack of respect’.

Minor essential revision

The key conclusion that more than one method has to be used to obtain a reasonably comprehensive picture is not surprising and perhaps the authors should quote the report of any other studies that arrived at the same conclusion in an investigation of hospital practice (e.g. Olsen S et al Quality and Safety in Healthcare 2007; 16: 40-4.).

The authors state that the study was approved by an ethical committee – please specify.

The paper needs to be re-read carefully to correct some errors in presentation.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

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

Graham Neale