Reviewer’s report

Title: Asthma and COPD in primary health care, quality according to national guidelines: a cross-sectional and a retrospective study.

Version: 1 Date: 6 February 2008

Reviewer: Onno P van Schayck

Reviewer’s report:

This is an interesting paper on a relevant subject.

Major Compulsory Revisions

It is useful to evaluate the effect of new guidelines with the help of Donobedian’s theory. The interesting aspect of this theory is the linking between structure, process and outcome of the quality of care. Unfortunately only aspects of structure and process and no aspects of outcome have been investigated in this study (e.g. why was the number of still smoking COPD patients not related to the time spent per patient, that would have given the ultimate answer to the questions asked! It is a bit too simple to refer to Reference 21 to answer this specific question). It would be good to make the research question (or aim) at the end of the Background more specific. At the end of the paper it turns out that only a very limited number of structure and process aspects have been investigated. It would be good to specify the aspects investigated in advance.

Another point of serious concern is the retrospectively examining of medical records. Nowhere is reported what the quality of these data is. When the data are not registered in a standardized way it is likely that most of them are not suitable for the research purposes where they are used for in this study. How accurate is the estimation of the time spent for ACNP? How likely is it that socially desirable answers were filled in by nurses reporting their own activities?

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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'