Reviewer’s report

Title: Standardised assessment of patients’ capacity to manage medications: a systematic review of published instruments.

Version: 1 Date: 9 February 2009

Reviewer: Ian Maidment

Reviewer’s report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

As discussed with the editor I have reviewed this paper as an experienced clinical pharmacist, but not necessarily an expert in this field.

My general comments are that the article is well written and deserves publication. There was no word count, and because of the PDF format I was not able to check the word count. However, I estimated the word count at approximately 3600. There were also 5 tables. As such, for a clinician I felt the article was long and ideally should be reduced in length. The results section, in particular was long and difficult to follow.

One other option could be two separate papers covering different aspects of this project e.g. one paper describing the criteria against which the instruments were assessed and the second paper the application of these criteria.

Apart from the length my other main concerns were -

1. I found it difficult to follow the reasoning for recommending the 6 tools, on page 16, for further investigation and this appeared overly subjective. For example the MedMaIDE is recommended, but then the author’s state on page 8 – “All instruments apart from the MedMaIDE required the patient to identify one or more medication etc.” There are similar inconsistencies e.g. page 9 – PA not recommended, but only one of two tools designed to assess ability to administer medication; page 10 MAA recommended, but modified after publication.

2. The limitations of this work do not appear to be clearly stated. The authors need to acknowledge restricting the search to English-language articles as a limitation.

3. One of the main conclusions is that there is not a standardised, objective, quantitative measure of patients’ ability to manage their own medications. However, it may not possible to produce a single tool to cover different patient populations.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. The exact search string, including connectors e.g. “or”, “and”, used should be
specified.

2. A CONSORT-type flow-chart would be helpful.

3. On page 15 could the authors confirm that the mean and maximum scores for the DRUGS and MMAA are correct?

4. Page 9 – the fact that the tool was tested in a homogenous sample is not necessarily a disadvantage – see comments above.

5. The authors do not report on ethnic groups – did any of the tools consider the impact of cultural factors?

6. Page 14 – the use of the words “Extreme groups” to describe various populations is not appropriate.

7. Page 16 – the authors mention publication bias. Any reason why a funnel plot was not considered?

8. Four of the recommended tools (DRUGS, MedMaIDE, MMAA, MMTest) were also recommended by Farris et al (2008). The apparent consistency, between two independent reviews, requires some comment.

Discretionary Revisions

1. The sources of the 14 tools e.g. published, non-published etc. included should be stated on the CONSORT type diagram.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**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