Reviewer's report

Title: Synoptic Tool for reporting of Hematological and Lymphoid neoplasms based on World Health Organization classification and College of American Pathologists checklist

Version: Date: 25 January 2007

Reviewer: Walter Henricks

Reviewer's report:

General
The authors describe the definition and application of a synoptic reporting module for hematopathological neoplasms in a laboratory information system. Overall, the rationale and advantages of synoptic reporting are defined well. While the paper describes items specific to one LIS, the concepts are sufficiently generalizable. The manuscript is enhanced by screen captures and other examples that illustrate aspects of the synoptic dictionaries in the LIS. There are some points that need to be addressed (below in minor essential revisions).

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
- The use of synoptic reporting is controversial among pathologists, and the authors should address this more. For instance, the methods describe potential additional steps that are required for a pathologist to enter and/or edit synoptic worksheets compared to usual reports. The authors should comment on pathologist acceptance in their experience, training required, learning curve, and related points that would impact consistent and correct use of synoptic reporting in this manner. Another aspect of pathologist acceptance is the ability and need sometimes to add free text for nuanced diagnoses or findings. The description of how this is accomplished in this system should be clarified.

- There is an incomplete sentence in the last paragraph of Conclusion that also relates to the final point in the point made above, beginning, "Pathologist desire for flexibility and creativity in content and language..."

- It is unclear what is meant in the Results by "Synoptic reporting, either as part of the pathology report or replacing the free text component..." In addition, in Figure 7, the example of the synoptic component of a report has verbiage, "This is NOT the final diagnosis. Use final diagnosis/comment for therapeutic decisions." Presumably, this verbiage appears in the final report. The authors should clarify the reason for this statement, i.e., why is it necessary, and in what ways (or why) synoptic diagnosis or information would be different than the final diagnosis.

- Figure 8 is not referenced in the text and also contains editing errors such as truncated words and unclear abbreviations. The purpose of the diagram, to illustrate workflow, is useful.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
- The authors may consider adding information about how much time was necessary to develop the templates that are used.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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