Reviewer's report

Title: Factors complicating asthma care for ethnic minority children: a qualitative study among care providers

Version: 1 Date: 9 December 2011

Reviewer: K K Williams

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting article by Seeleman and colleagues looking at perceived barriers for asthma care as reported by physicians and then using qualitative assessment of these responses to identify areas in which clinicians were unaware of their “incompetence” for providing culturally-sensitive, patient-centered care. While interesting, there are a few limitations that need to be acknowledged by the authors (i.e., minor but essential revisions). First, the title seems to suggest that we know that the factors identified by the authors had an impact on actual care; however, in order to know that we would have to have some comparison group showing that use of optimal techniques resulted in better uptake of services or better outcomes in ethnic minority children. Moreover, the investigators did not elicit feedback from the patients to see how the different approaches might have affected patient uptake. Therefore, the title seems to overstate the actual study findings. For example, it might be more appropriate to call this “A qualitative assessment of deficiencies in patient-centered care among clinicians caring for ethnic minority children.” Here the measure is a comparison to an idealized model of culturally competent, patient centered care, not whether the factors identified actually complicated care and prevented adequate receipt of treatment.

The authors should also recognize as a study limitation that they only interviewed a small number of physicians (n = 13). In addition, the very nature of the questioning (i.e., “Please think of a case of a patient with asthma from an ethnic minority background (aged 4-10) that did not go smoothly in your opinion”) may have elicited responses that do not reflect routine care, and therefore, may not reflect a general need for cultural competence training. Lastly, the study relied on physician recall and not taped conversations, and therefore may not reflect the actual physician-patient conversation. In short, the authors need to enumerate these potential limitations of their study.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.