Reviewer's report

**Title:** The information sources accessed by UK paediatricians and the journals they use to inform their clinical practice: a questionnaire survey.

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 6 July 2006

**Reviewer:** Andrew Riordan

**Reviewer's report:**

**General**
This is a questionnaire survey of consultant and non-consultant career grade paediatricians in the UK. The survey asked the sources of information these doctors accessed and which they considered important. There is a lot of data collected and reported, but the findings are similar to previous surveys across other specialties. However it provides interesting data for UK Paediatricians.

The paper needs improving in a number of ways for it to be acceptable in a medical journal.

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

1. **Aim.** The stated aim is "to contribute some insights from a range of perspectives." This is too imprecise. A clearer research question and aim are needed. The question needs to be clear if Paediatricians were being asked about where they find sources of information in general or if they have a specific clinical question (these may vary).
2. **Journals available.** Did they ask which journals are available to the doctors surveyed? This will dramatically affect those accessed. A previous survey of Paediatricians in training found variation in availability of the "Top 7" Paediatric journals [Arch Dis Child 2004; 89:469-471]. UK journals are more likely to be available, which may explain why they were accessed more often. Did they ask which journals the doctors were sent as members of societies? All RCPCH members will be sent ADC, all BMA members will get BMJ, and various specialty societies will get journals (e.g. ESPID and Paed Infect Dis Journal).
3. **"Journals read."** I'm surprised that many paediatricians can read more than 10 journals. What was the definition of "read"? If it means scanning the contents page, then this may be true. However if this study is about how clinical practice is informed, more in depth reading might be needed. It’s hard to know what the respondents meant by "reading journals".
4. **Writing style.** The style of writing is not that usually used in medical journals. All parts of the paper are far too long and need radical editing. The authors are encouraged to seek advice from someone in their institution who has experience of writing in paediatric journals.
5. **Conclusions.** The conclusions in the abstract and the text are not supported by the data. The study shows where paediatricians say they get information from. It cannot say what impact this information has, how they use it etc.
6. **Statistics.** a). It would be useful to see if the differences seen in the study were statistically significant. This could be done for academic vs. non-academic, consultant vs. non-consultant etc b). Median rather than mode should be used.

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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)

1. IF for Pediatric Research. This used to be much higher. Is this correct?
2. Figures. The headings on the X axis are missing in many of these (2-4).
3. Figure 3 and 4 would be better as one table with statistical analysis.
4. Table 1 would be better as an appendix.
5. Table 3 the information in the top line could be in the text and this table deleted
6. Table 5 is duplicated in table 6 and could be deleted
7. Refs **Embarrassed to point out that my study of availability of journals etc for paediatricians is missing [Riordan et al]**

Reference
Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

**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**: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**Statistical review**: Yes

**Declaration of competing interests**: No competing interests except a previous publication [Arch Dis Child 2004; 89:469-471], which I pointed out the to authors when I completed thier questionnaire.