Reviewer's report

Title: The General Practitioner and the diagnosis of occupational diseases.

Version: 3 Date: 2 June 2010

Reviewer: William C Heymann

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Review – The General Practitioner and the Diagnosis of Occupational Diseases

1. This paper provides new insight into the existing body of work in management of occupational illness. It should serve as a useful guide for those primary care practitioners without a strong background in occupational medicine to help ensure the most appropriate comprehensive management of their patients.

2. It addresses an important issue that should be of interest to a wide variety of General Practitioners and other primary care practitioners. The four questions referred to in the paper should help the General Practitioner focus on any occupational aspects of the illness.

3. The paper is well argued and referenced and outlines clear guidelines to help improve the diagnosis of occupational illness.

4. The reasoning is sound and developed on principles from prior published work.

5. Revisions

Discretionary Revisions

I suggest the paper may be supplemented by the inclusion of comments and a reference to The US National Library of Medicine Toxicology and Environmental Health Information Program (Philip Wexler. Toxicology. Volume 198, Issues 1-3, Pages 161-168) which could add another valuable resource for the addressed audience.

Since the term “General Practitioner” is no longer used widely in the US, in order to broaden the targeted audience, one could consider adding the term “Primary Care Practitioner” to the paper as in the US this includes General and Family Practitioners, General Internists, and other practitioners who see similar types of patients.

Minor essential revisions

In the title, all major words should be capitalized: “The General Practitioner and the Diagnosis of Occupational Diseases”

In the abstract, the last sentence in the second paragraph should be changed to
add the word “may” since consultation may not always be required, and the purpose of the paper includes instruction on how the General Practitioner can improve his own diagnostic skills in the area of occupational medicine. Suggested change is as follows: “This may require consultation with a specialist in occupational medicine.” Furthermore, using “may” places the abstract in alignment with the body of the paper where in the last paragraph in Problems and solutions, “may” is used in reference to consultation.

Further minor essential revisions are spelling corrections and minor phrase or word revisions as follows:

Introduction

Paragraph 1, change spelling of practitioner and use plural form: “Practitioner” to “Practitioners.”

Problems and Solutions

Paragraph 1, change “each has varying criteria” to “each has varying value.”
Add comma after “Similarly” in the sentence beginning “Similarly, gloves suitable for…”
Paragraph 2, last sentence, add “the” before GP, and correct spelling of “miss-understandings” to “misunderstandings.”

Conclusions

Paragraph 1, add a period at the end of the second sentence. Correct spelling of ‘miss-count’ to ‘miscount’.
Paragraph 2, first sentence, change to “...will assist General Practitioners to overcome any of their inadequacies in occupational medicine,...” Correct spelling of “work-place” to “workplace.”
Paragraph 3, first sentence, add an s to disease to make it plural. Second sentence, correct spelling of “gate-keeps” to “gatekeepers.” Last sentence, remove the word “an” before “improved quality” to read as “…result in improved quality.”

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.