Reviewer's report

Title: Referrals to a regional allergy clinic - an eleven year audit

Version: 1 Date: 3 August 2010

Reviewer: Samantha Walker

Reviewer's report:

This is a very interesting report describing allergy referral patterns in the southwest of England and the authors are to be congratulated on their efforts. I have a number of comments which I hope are helpful:

Major compulsory revisions:
1. These data are very useful to understand allergy referral patterns and related health service utilisation. However, it is inappropriate to even imply prevalence from these data as this would require a very different methodological approach. In my view, the simple messages here (who is being referred, with what, from where) are the most important, and a lot of the other data could be deleted without losing the key messages.
2. My other major methodological criticism would be the use of statistics in a descriptive survey. It is my understanding that statistical comparisons should not be performed in the absence of a specific, testable research question/hypothesis and I would recommend that they are not included. The descriptive numerical data is sufficient to tell the story.
3. Overall, I think that there is too much data in the paper which is unnecessary and likely to be off-putting to the reader. The paper would be improved by retaining tables 1, 3, and 4 (but taking out all the p values) but deleting the rest (summarising the data briefly in the text where necessary) and retaining figures 1, 2 and 3. Figures 4a and 4b don't add very much and the findings are already appropriately described in the text.

Minor essential revisions:
4. The style is a little chatty for a scientific manuscript and would benefit from some editorial attention
5. in the background, you should cite the primary reference for anaphylaxis deaths not the Anaphylaxis Campaign literature
6. there is now a 2010 version of the DH review of allergy services that has just been published; useful to include reference to it here
7. In the results section, do you have diagnostic information on those people referred to the clinic who were NOT allergic? This would be fascinating and really add to your story....
8. methods based on 'common sense' and 'sensible' are not appropriate in a scientific manuscript and I suggest playing down these data; simply describing the aggregated groups is sufficient and again I would remove the p values.
9. the discussion could be much more punchy; the second paragraph is great and you should try to make all of your discussion as meaningful. In the last paragraph, I think it's inappropriate to talk about 'strong associations' as you haven't used the correct methodology to draw these conclusions.

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

**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'