Reviewer's report

Title: Colon Cancer Screening Among African American Church Members: A Qualitative and Quantitative Study Of Patient-Provider Communication

Version: 1 Date: 9 February 2004

Reviewer: Laurence F McMahon

Reviewer's report:

General
In general this is an interesting exploratory study about the association between the patient's perception of the quality of patient-physician communication and the result of colon cancer screening. There remain some issues that need to be acknowledged.

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

There is no mention of the number of church members who were approached to reach the 397 who completed the surveys. While this is a convenience sample, it is important to get an idea of the potential pool of individuals who agreed to participate. This is especially true when the outcome of interest is a screening test that requires a patient's cooperation.

What do the authors think of the potential confounding of communication and knowledge?

The authors do not mention the patient's perception of the doctor's recommendation for CRC screening. If a physician has a negative or neutral perception of the value of CRC screening and has good communication skills, you would expect his patients to have a lower CRC screening rate if good communication skills motivate the patient in the desired direction. The authors should address.

The recommendations listed on the top of page 10 are not supported by the results of this study. While they maybe valid, they do not stem from the current study.

The authors do not discuss the potential problem of clustering by the physician in confounding the results of their analysis. As patients are likely to go to a small number of physicians in the community the patient's responses cannot be considered as truly independent. An appropriate analysis must therefore account for the clustering effect of patients to physician. This should at least be discussed as a limitation.

Finally, the conclusions are much too strong given the pilot nature of this project conducted on a convenience sample.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
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

Declaration of competing interests: None