Reviewer's report

Title: What they fill in today, may not be useful tomorrow: Lessons learned from a study of medical records at the Women hospital in Tabriz, Iran

Version: 1 Date: 31 December 2007

Reviewer: Petra Knaup

Reviewer's report:

Nice, well written paper with sound (but basic) methodology.

The authors analysed the quality of a random sample of 300 medical record of a hospital in Iran. Main criteria were the completeness of the records and documents and semi-structured interviews of 20 physicians and nurses. The authors state, that the quality of the record should be increased and that an EPR might be helpful.

Minor essential revisions:

*Abstract: Add some consequences and perspectives to the conclusion part of the abstract

*Introduction: Second last sentence - in the medical records (not on).

*Objective: Add the information, why these aims are important to reach. What is the motivation for the research. What to you intend to change/plan on basis of the results.

*Methods: I do not understand the sentence "... and by considering confidence interval of....". What Confidence Interval do they mean? Why is it necessary? Which question does the CI answer? Is it really necessary?

The information in the two paragraphs "The sheets were categorized in two groups..." and "The next group is those sheets..." should be placed before 3.1 and 3.2

Is availability checked for both of the mentioned groups?

How did the checklists look like? What was the content of the checklists? Were the checklists validated? What is the Gold standard? Did you perform a quality control for filling out the checklists?

*3.3 usability. Delete first sentence. I did not find any results referring to this sentence. If I am wrong, please refer to this sentence in the results.

*Results, 4.1 Medical records: The explanation of the categories belongs to the methods section.

*4.1.1 Refer to table 1 in the first sentence.

it was predictable that not all records might contain...

Delete last sentence, it is redundant
*4.2.1 daily working hours?

*Please shorten chapter 4.2 considerably. Maybe it is helpful to better integrate the results of the physicians and nurses, so that they are better comparable for the reader.

*Please explain: "...almost all physicians had requested.... and in most cases they had failed." Is this only true if the patient was in another hospital before?

*Please shorten discussion considerably.

* Is it severe that 10% of progress reports are missing?

* ".... paid more attention to legal aspects of documentation", than... (please add)

*In my understanding it is unusual, that the medical record department care for the completeness of the records. How should the get the missing information? Better explain this concepts, which may be different in different countries of the world.

* Which degrees of completeness are reported by other studies?

* Author's contribution: Who performed the data recording for the quality control? (Who filled in the checklists?)

* References:
Do not cite the months of publication

5. Author is missing
6. Authors are Dick, Steen, publishing company: National academy press
8. title is missing

*Table 1: Add availability and completeness in the title of the legend. Explain N/A in the legend

*Results: Were all records of the random sample immediately available? Or did they increased the sample, when a record could not be found.

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, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.