Reviewer's report

Title: Gatekeepers of health: a qualitative assessment of child care centre staff's perspectives, practices and challenges to enteric illness prevention and management in child care centres

Version: 1 Date: 17 January 2008

Reviewer: Eleni Galanis

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. One of the study objectives was to show the gap between public health recommendations and actions taken. Public health recommendations in the jurisdiction where the study was conducted were not presented, making it impossible for the reader to assess whether this objective was met. Please describe these recommendations.

2. It is not clear what type of knowledge was assessed nor how authors felt they could conclude that CCC staff used intimate knowledge of symptoms and causes of illness to guide their decisions. The only obvious knowledge piece presented was in the definition of diarrhea and outbreak. This needs to be strengthened or clarified in the Results.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Substantial editing is required, particularly in punctuation, consistency of tenses, completeness of sentences and correction of typos in order to improve clarity and readability.

2. In Intro or Discussion, state whether this sort of study has been conducted in this population before and contrast results if available.

3. In Results, describe the centres from which staff were selected (e.g. age of children, number of children, number of classes, population served). In Discussion, authors state that major themes were similar regardless of differences in staff or centres. These differences have not been described.

4. In Results, the themes presented in the 2nd paragraph do not coincide with the subtitles or themes presented right after. Please clarify.

5. In Results/Tools for Surveillance, are the various forms standardized? Are the personal journals those of staff or children? How did the information collected vary between centres? Why do the authors say that staff can easily report? This is not described in the results.

6. In Results/Using Experience to Diagnose, what is a diagnostic approach? In addition, the quote that comes immediately after this does not seem to have any link to the preceding text.

7. In Results/Time, clarify what type of monitoring record keeping is essential for.
Would staff really prioritise record-keeping over child care?

8. In Discussion/Consistent Guidance, the recommendation to provide consistent guidelines around decision-making and resources is not supported by findings from this study. These findings should be added to the results or authors should state that this recommendation is based on other studies.

Discretionary Revisions

1. In Methods, clarify whether the 4 groups of staff who worked at the same centre worked in 1 or 4 centres.
2. Move the description of what focus groups are from the Methods into the Background.
3. Can remove the allusion to the original design including parental focus groups in the Conclusions.
4. Discuss how these findings apply to an international readership.

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: 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.