Reviewer's report

Title: Read coding patients with learning disabilities: Lessons from a cohort study

Version: 1 Date: 7 April 2008

Reviewer: Angela Hassiotis

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined? The question is well defined.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described? This is a survey of GP coded data on female patients with learning disability supplemented by additional case finding exercise within the local learning disabilities teams. This method ensured that the practices received further support and assistance in ascertaining all of their practice patients who had a learning disability and to code them appropriately. This is a very important healthcare issue not only mentioned in Valuing People but also is a Quality and Outcomes Framework target for all surgeries.

3. Are the data sound? In essence the authors found that there was variation in how practices recorded data on learning disabilities—although it is unclear from the article why a female cohort was chosen. The authors allude to a previous project on cervical screening for this population. Information on that research would further elucidate the present report. In addition, I would like to know more about the practice size and the actual number of women in the cohort.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? It is written in an accessible format and as far as I can see the study has received ethical approval and patient confidentiality was protected. The paper follows the conventional format of reporting research findings.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? In the discussion the first section "how this fits in" should be in a narrative rather than bullet point format and it should make some reference to current policy guidelines such as QOF. In the second section "main findings", I am unclear as to what the authors mean with "...could be associated with environmental factors". What are those factors and their relevance to learning disability; how does that affect service provision? This paragraph needs further clarification.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished? Yes

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? the title should bear the fact that the patients coded are a cohort of female service users with learning disabilities

9. Is the writing acceptable? In my view, it is rather conversational but does not
detract greatly from the interesting aspects of the study that confirm some of the anecdotal evidence about the ongoing difficulties in coding learning disabilities and for GPs to accept this as part of their workload.

**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'