Reviewer's report

Title: Sandwell Cardiovascular Prevention Project: evaluation of a pilot project for primary care based prevention

Version: 1  Date: 17 November 2007

Reviewer: Serguei Pakhomov

Reviewer's report:

General

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

The most problematic issue with this manuscript is the confusing handling of the missing risk factor data. It appears that the information only practices had very poor availability of risk factor information while the practices using a project nurse had very complete risk factor information available by virtue of the nurses assessing the patients’ risk factors from the onset of the study. If this is indeed true, then it is very likely that the improved relative risk estimates for the project nurse practices are due to better risk factor data availability. An argument can be made that if appropriate data were available in the information only practices there would be no observable difference between the two with respect to CVD treatment regardless of the presence of the nurse.

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

Page 2: Abstract Methods: insert "years old"
Page 2: Abstract Conclusions: delete repetitive "patients" and a preposition "with"
Page 4: replace "treatment of those eligible" with "subsequent treatment"
Page 5: PCT - first use of abbreviation - deabbreviate
page 5: revise "and the matched"
page 6: "reschedule" should be "rescheduled"

Page 7: Results. First paragraph. This need to be better motivated. Seems that 15% is a very low proportion of patients for whom risk factor data is complete. What are the characteristics of the patients with missing data? Morbidity? Age? Do patients with missing values tend to be in better health? The fact that they tended to see their GP’s less than those who had missing data would suggest that as well.
Risk factor information and numbers of probable high-risk patients. How is this different from the first paragraph "Among individuals aged 35 to 74, not on antihypertensives and free from CVD, there was sufficient risk factor information to calculate CVD risk (a smoking history, two blood pressures and a total cholesterol) in 14.8% (95% CI: 13.5% to 16.1%) of the 2,997 in the comparison group and 15.3% (95% CI: 14.2% to 16.5%) of the 3,916 in the intervention group."? If these are different groups, that needs to be stated explicitly. Need to define the populations more clearly here.

"Of these, 10.6% (range 1.9% to 30.8%) had sufficient risk" This is confusing. If these patients had insufficient risk factor data for full risk factor calculation, then how was it determined that these patients had over 20% CVD risk?

"but there is clearly.." remove "but"

"Use information technology to identify patients." This is a fragment and so are several subsequent sentences. Needs to be revised.

"the way in it is used"

Confusing sentence: "It is of note that the weakest part of the strategy was prescribing, which relied on changing behaviour within the existing system."

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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