Reviewer's report

Title: Why is spirometry underused in the diagnosis of the breathless patient: a qualitative study

Version: 2 Date: 23 March 2011

Reviewer: Nicholas Zwar

Reviewer's report:

Major compulsory revisions

1. The qualitative methods are not well described. There is very scant description of the approach to analysis and how coding of the data was done and this is needed. It may have been better to have had a trigger scenario for discussion so that the doctors had a similar presentation in mind when discussing their approach.

2. Data comes from doctors working in quite different contexts and thinking about the presentation of breathlessness in quite different ways. There is no information on whether saturation of themes was reached in the gathering of the data. This requires comment.

3. It is not clear that the study had formal research ethics approval. This needs to be clarified.

4. The difficulty of the different contexts influencing how the doctors and students think about the presentation of the breathless patient is not adequately discussed. The convenience sampling approach has a number of problems, some of which are acknowledged.

5. In the background a study from Australia is mentioned but no reference provided.

Discretionary revisions

The references are at times from difficult to access journals. Consider whether these are the best references.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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