Reviewer’s report

Title: Impact of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Diseases clinical pathway on clinical outcomes: A Case Study In A Teaching Hospital In Malaysia

Version: 1 Date: 2 November 2011

Reviewer: Kris Vanhaecht

Reviewer’s report:

Comments manuscript 8310964526079700

Overall:
1. Should definitely be revised by experienced writer with regard to:
   • clarity of the message (cfr abstract, methods);
   • syntax and grammar (native speaker!)
2. Abstract: methods and results unclear
3. References: missing or not up to date
4. Abbreviations: full spelling if first use; text and tables not fully understandable
5. Tables: not clear (measurement units used?); Table 4, 5 and 6 should be merged

Methods:
• Only matched for severity? Why not for age and gender ?.
• History effect? Discussion!!
• Inclusion criteria of 12 years? Most first diagnosis of COPD is above 40 years…
• Why this specific exclusion criteria? (for instance LTOT > 15 days, why these specific comorbidities?)
• Development of the care pathway: based on evidence, specific guidelines? Who was involved in development process? How was the pathway implemented? Why was a pathway chosen as improvement method?
• What are characteristics of the intervention? The intervention is a pathway but what do the authors mean with it, are pathways complex interventions or paper based protocols?
• From 612 identified patients with COPD exacerbation to about 200 included patients => I cannot follow the process from 612 to 200
• How were data collected for both groups? Both patient record analyses? Were surveys used?
• Outcomes: readmission rate on 30 days, 6 months? What was the follow-up interval?
• Were consecutive patients included?
Discussion:

• First three paragraphs should be in background
• Next Six paragraphs were not about the study (discussion on demographic etc.; not so relevant for this study on the impact of a care pathway
• Discussion on optimal duration: depends on context (organization of home care etc)
• Different in readmission and mortality: impact of comorbidities? Reason for readmission?
• Was the pathway responsible for the improved results? Can the authors describe the relation between their intervention and the outcomes, where they expected or not?
• Additional information on the continuous follow-up would be interesting.

Main conclusion:

This is an interesting project and the findings should be published as there is a lack of publications on COPD pathways (although there are many pathway improvement projects in this field). At this moment the paper is too weak for publication and asks for major revision. Probably revising this paper and using the SQUIRE guidelines to structure it, could be helpful.

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 I have no competing interests.