Reviewer's report

Title: Effectiveness of a quality management program in dental care practices

Version: 2
Date: 25 February 2014

Reviewer: Paul Batchelor

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

As the authors have identified, the term 'quality' of healthcare is a multidimensional term. While the authors have provided a framework on how quality could be measured, the finer aspects of what should be need a greater explanation. For example, it would be helpful to provide a more detailed description of what exactly was included in the german system and, since it has been a requirement (? to practice) since 2006, what impact it has had.

I would also like to see more details of the differences between the initial medical assessment tool and the dental tool. While agreeing with the authors that differences exist, there are a number of areas which would be consistent. For example, are the finance issues any different, and if yes, how and why?

Third, I am not sure I agree with the authors that their work is not about patient outcomes (page 10 limitations). There is an important distinction to be made between clinical outcomes, for example has disease reoccurred within a particular time period, and non-clinical outcomes, for example the patient is very happy with the care they received.

This leads onto the last issue which I think needs greater discussion; the difference between statistical and clinical significance. While differences between the numerical values derived are tested for significance, I am struggling to understand what exactly does this mean in clinical terms if anything.

Minor Essential Revisions

There are a number of revisions required to the current text.

In the Background section of the abstract, do the authors mean 'improve dental care', or 'improve the provision of dental care'?

Page 3 after reference 11. 'Already' should be 'Since'.

Page 4
(i) do the authors mean 'quality management' or 'quality assurance'?
(ii) just before references (18.19) I think the word 'the' should be inserted between improving and management.
(iii) Line 2 of the methods section, change general practice care to general
medical care.

Page 7

Last paragraph, drop 'Significant' and start the sentence 'Improvements'.

Page 8

Last line: 'data are' not 'data is'.

Page 9

Lat line of first paragraph the authors use the wording 'for private practice'. I think 'private' could be dropped.

Page 10.

The issue of 'pay for performance' (3rd sentence) is much more complex than highlighted. After all isn't a fee-for-service system a form of pay-for-performance? I think this paragraph should be rewritten highlighting the very valid sentiment expressed by the authors in the remaining sentences in the paragraph.

Discretionary 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:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests