Reviewer’s report

Title: Ethnic variations in orthodontic treatment need in London schoolchildren

Version: 1 Date: 12 August 2005

Reviewer: Wagner Marcenes

Reviewer’s report:

General
The present paper was well written in a clear and logical style. The introduction would benefit from a more general review of literature. For example, orthodontic treatment is a public health challenging to NHS and all other goverments.

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

The authors should present confidence limits to the prevalence figures reported and p values for any comparison; dentists assessment of IOTN-AC should not be considered gold standard but normative assessment; percent agreement presented in table 4 seems incorrect as it should add to 75% (Overall agreement) and not exceed 100%; kappa scores should be included in table 4 and its calculation should be checked as percent agreement is part of this calculation, kappa results are influenced by the prevalence of the condition and the authors should comment on this; figure 3 should be replaced by a different type of data analysis (see Douglas Altman, Practical statistics for medical research, chapter 14); and the authors should avoid use tests of association to verify agreement.

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

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

The present paper tackles an important subject. However, the manuscript did not achieve its full potential. The manuscript would benefit from tackling the issues in greater depth. For example, results from the comparison of perceived need between ethnic groups may be confounded by differences in normative need. Therefore, one cannot interpret correctly the findings without appropriate modeling. Similarly, the ethnic grouping is too general. Back Caribbean is different than black African, as well as, Indian are different from Pakistanis. Clearly different cultures were collated and this may have canceled some differences.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.