Reviewer’s report

Title: Improving capacity for evidence-based practice in South East Asia: evaluating the role of research fellowships in the SEA-ORCHID Project

Version: 1 Date: 21 January 2010

Reviewer: Hamish J McKenzie

Reviewer’s report:

This is an interesting evaluation of a pragmatically adapted fellowship program that set out to develop evidence based practice in South East Asia. The results are not dramatic, but the whole study may be of value to others working to improve standards of healthcare in developing countries.

Minor Essential Revisions

The paper could be improved if the following points are addressed:

1. The results section in the abstract should state that Cochrane systematic reviews were more likely to be completed than other outcomes

2. In the Tables in the Results section, the status of progress is recorded as determined at July 2008, and it is not clear how this relates to the "6 months post fellowship" interview - did all the fellowship visits take place at the same time and did they all have same time to come to fruition?

3. The Fellowship outputs section on p10 should give actual numbers for completed reviews, CPGs etc. for comparison purposes. The fact that Cochrane reviews were the most likely outcome to be completed might be the most important finding.

4. 1st sentence, top of p11 states "Thirteen of the fellows undertook a Cochrane systematic review...." but looking at Tables 1 and 2 I can find only 12 listed.

5. In the Discussion p 15, 2nd para, it is claimed that "Several fellows were able to make practice changes in their hospitals" The evidence presented in the results section to support this statement is not strong. On p11 it is said that "many...fellows were keen to implement specific clinical practice changes", but this is not the same as saying it actually happened. On p13 there is one example given of changes with regard to management of folic acid supplement, but the number of fellows who actually changed practice is not stated. Actual numbers with the nature of the changes would add to the paper.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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