Reviewer's report

Title: Family Physicians' Perceptions of Academic Detailing: a quantitative and qualitative study

Version: 1 Date: 5 March 2007

Reviewer: Peter Schattner

Reviewer's report:

General

This is a very well written paper. It is clear and easy to follow. It does have two major drawbacks, however.

1) First, the response rate is low, especially among non-users of academic detailing. It is always difficult to know what to make of studies that have low response rates. Should any paper which has a response rate of less than 40 percent (or some other figure) be automatically rejected for publication? This is probably too harsh a view and I feel that there are some lessons in the paper which are of interest, even though it is not really possible to quantitative the findings with accuracy. I therefore believe that the paper has some value, although it is more qualitative than quantitative.

2) The paper, as the title suggestions, as about 'perceptions'. As with low response rates, the reader can decide whether 'perceptions' reflect reality. Do we really know whether the views expressed by the FPs on what encourages them to participate in academic detailing really does so? FPs might say they don't have time for academic detailing; perhaps if they were paid to listen they might suddenly find the time. The issue might therefore be money rather than time per se. This is a limitation of this type of study. Is it a fatal limitation? No, I don't think so.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

The authors could make some comments about the above issues, although they do allude to it briefly. Perhaps the Discussion section could address the value and limitations of this type of study in a bit more detail. In turn, some of the findings in the Discussion section could be summarised further. At times the paper reads like an evaluation of this specific academic detailing program, rather than providing the reader with lessons about academic detailing that are generalisable. More space should be given to the 'science' than the specifics of this program's good and bad points.

Finally, I was not sure if the participants knew that they were being interviewed by people associated with the running of the academic detailing program. This could have biased the results. The authors should clarify this.

What next?: Accept after discretionary 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, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.