Reviewer's report

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

Version: 2 Date: 14 June 2007

Reviewer: marc De Meyere

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GENERAL REMARKS

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?

The question is not new, but well defined and there are very few other studies on this topic.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?

The description of the methods can be improved (see detailed remarks section). It would be of help if the exact interview questions were given in order to provide sufficient information to replicate the work.

3. Are the data sound and well controlled?

Yes for the quantitative data, not clear for the qualitative data.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?

See suggestions for improvement in the detailed remarks section.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? YES for the discussion, not for the conclusions

6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? YES

7. Is the writing acceptable? YES

DETAILED REMARKS

*Background*

- 2nd paragraph; Habraken /et al/ found....

- p 4, 3rd paragraph on the Academic Detailing Service: (approximately 850 are in practices for which academic detailing is relevant) => what is meant by this, when is AD considered relevant?

*Methods*

- 1st paragraph: the physicians were divided into three groups. It is not clear if all the physicians have received the offer of academic detailing, I assume they did. Did physicians in the used once group receive as many invitations as the physicians in the used > once group? This is important to know, since both groups were aggregated in the analysis of the questionnaire. Similarly, I assume the physicians in the "never used" group also got the invitation for academic detailing.
2nd paragraph: ... whom we considered eligible to participate in academic detailing. => which criteria were used for deciding on eligibility?

3rd paragraph: why 10 interviews?

*Results*

1st paragraph: These responses were not significantly different from the used > once group so we combined the 2 for data analysis. => Were there any differences between both groups in sociodemographic and practice characteristics and did both groups receive the same offer (see methods)? E.g., if the physicians with only one visit had refused subsequent visits, it would be interesting to analyse them separately, especially for the interviews.

The presentation of results is confusing, since data retrieved by the interviews and data retrieved by the questionnaire are not clearly distinguished. This could be solved by making two sections with subtitles. Also, within one method, the distinction in the results concerning non-users and users is not clear, the data should be more clearly separated.

For the results of the interviews, too much emphasis is placed on the number of physicians making a statement. This is misleading, since qualitative data do not give an accurate image of frequencies. Therefore, numbers should be avoided in the description.

*Discussion*

p 14: it's remarkable: Doctors claim that they have no time for academic detailing. If that is true, they certainly have no time for CME either, because that is even more time consuming due to traveling time.

p 15: "We reviewed 28 studies ...... perhaps because of the small number of studies." This paragraph should be omitted. It is not correct to present a statistical analysis in the discussion, but an even more important problem is that the analysis does not take into account possible confounders, such as the topic presented in the visit. In their own article, the authors state that the topic is an important predictor of accepting an academic detailer, thus it should certainly be taken into account in an analysis looking for possible predictors of AD acceptability.

p 16:previous evaluation survey:reference?

p 17: There is a contradiction in the following remark: "In addition, users are much more likely than non-users to participate in the program in the future. However, the low input from the non-users .... raises the possibility of response bias in that those who value the Service are more likely to respond." => If non-users favouring the service would be more likely to respond to the questionnaire, the difference with users would on the contrary have been smaller than. It is also possible that non-users with a negative attitude are more likely to return the questionnaire to ventilate their barriers, which would even increase the gap with users if those are more likely to ventilate their positive attitude. To avoid this problem, I would simply state that non-users are difficult to reach, which is a limitation of this type of study.

p 16: At the end of the discussion, limitations of the study must be mentioned i.e response rate of all groups are too low and surely for the non-users: 25% other limitations: to add - Conclusions: they don't give a sufficient answer to the 3 research questions

In general: more clear distinction between the results of the users and non-users, even during the discussion. *Tables and figures*

Table 3: For the item "usefulness of handout", the comparison between non-users and users does not make much sense, because non-users did not receive handouts.

Figure 1 and 2: On the Y axis: /respondents/ instead of responders.

Figure 3 should be removed (see discussion)
Conclusion: Important and good work.