Reviewer’s report

**Title:** Web 2.0 applications enhance personalized access to healthcare professionals - an intervention study.

**Version:** 3  **Date:** 19 May 2011

**Reviewer:** Samantha Adams

**Reviewer’s report:**

Major compulsory revisions

1. **Background**

Web 2.0 is a broadly defined and used term that can refer to many (types of) applications, ideas, etc. Please define how the authors use this term and specify as soon as possible for the reader what the 2 applications are (and are there actually 2? The authors seem only to discuss one). Preferably, the authors should give this information in the introduction/background; otherwise the paper starts off and remains very vague. If the authors do not want to describe the two applications immediately, at least name them and then give the reader a signpost that indicates in which section they will be described further.

Also be clear and consistent in the use of terminology. The authors introduce the online patient book (but fail to explain what it is) and call it a “system”. They then proceed to indicate that it will be addressed throughout the paper as a patients’ health informatics tool; however, in the subsequent section, it is referred to as a web 2.0 application, which the authors seem to define as dialogue-based, although this is not necessarily a good definition of web 2 (chat groups and other applications first used in the mid to late 1990s were also dialogue based!).

I would further recommend rewriting the background to start with the patient group, outline the problem, define the research questions, etc. and then introduce the system – what it is and why this offers a potential solution to the problem.

2. **Method**

The aim stays vague because the applications being studied remain vague.

The ethics section seems fine, but would probably be more logically placed at the end of the methods section.

Under the sub-heading “health informatics tools”, please add methodological literature regarding the methods employed. Explain further which “various participatory methods” were chosen and why? Does an interview qualify as a participatory method? You seem to have conducted online interviews, although this isn’t evident in the beginning of this section – please refer to literature about best practice when interviewing online and show how the chosen approach meets the requirements of best practice. Did the authors intend to use a full
participatory design approach? If so, add references, if not, this choice needs to be justified, etc.

The application that emerged from the research project is actually more of a result than a method. In the methods section, the authors should ensure that the necessary information is included to meet the qualitative criteria for validity and reliability (these are different from quantitative criteria but nonetheless important!) To meet these criteria, the authors should tell more about their interviews and design workshops, detailing: what was done, how and why this approach was taken. More information on the number and types of participants is also necessary.

Also, please add information about how the translation of the interviews was double-checked and whether or not nuances, colloquialisms, etc. were preserved.

3. Discussion
A very good discussion, with a few points of attention:

Why is process information about contacting patients listed in the discussion rather than in the methods? Essentially, this is acceptable if that information is also discussed for relevance, importance, etc.; however, the authors fail to do this.

Interesting approach with respect to patient identification. Did patients comment on this in the interviews? How does this relate to literature on privacy, identity and participation in online environments?

BRAID project is suddenly dropped into the discussion without further explanation or definition.

4. Literature
I find it especially disappointing that there is no mention of fairly recent work from Medical Informatics about web 2.0 applications in health.

One would assume that the authors would begin by reviewing literature on this topic in addition to the literature related to the target group and then use this literature to give a solid definition on which to base their work. This would solve some of the problems mentioned above.

Minor Essential Revisions
The writing style, especially in the introduction, is very cumbersome. This makes it hard to follow the authors. There are also many grammatical mistakes. Please have a native speaker thoroughly revise the manuscript.

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

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited
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.