Reviewer's report

Title: A dialogue-based web application enhances personalized access to healthcare professionals - an intervention study.

Version: 7 Date: 18 April 2012

Reviewer: Samantha Adams

Reviewer's report:

The authors have done a good job in restructuring this paper and have addressed the major criticisms of the previous version. I do still have several concerns that I outline below. These need to be addressed in another revision.

In the introduction, the authors should include references to internet-specific literature about the asynchronicity of communication and what this means for patients. They mention reviewing such literature, but do not refer to any sources and there are plenty. The literature they do reference appears to be more about patient-provider communication in general. Especially since this is then used to justify the methods in the project, there should be concrete references. One example might be to studies of email communication between patients and providers.

Also in the introduction, the sentence, "A form of: Exchangeability...." should be amended. First of all, the sentence is awkward and grammatically incorrect. Secondly, the authors define exchangeability as being able to exchange, whereby they define a word with itself. I hope that this can be cleared up with adjustments to language, but the authors should make sure that the definitions of all concepts used in the paper are clear and well-defined.

In the methods, subsection on evaluation, the authors should justify their choice of method. Why did they do such qualitative research through a survey?

In the results and discussion, the authors make an odd distinction between qualitative and quantitative 'effects', which seems to be an odd categorization. They seem to be pointing to effects that are indentified via qualitative research methods versus those that are measured through a quantitative analysis. This does not mean that the effects are quantitative per se, but that they are capable of being quantified. These are two different things. The authors should therefore be careful in making such a distinction and should not confuse the methodology to gather insights with the categorization of the insights themselves.

In the section describing what the authors call qualitative effects, there are several problems. Much of the findings are not new, but have already been suggested with email for example. Why is this study different? What new insights does it contribute? Then, the distinction between using something as a tool and seeing it as a tool is odd. What do the authors want to say here? The last paragraph is potentially interesting, but now stays very vague and general.
Could you work this out further?

For this reason, but also because of how other sections are structured, I am not sure I agree with the decision of the authors to put all of the quotes in a table and then summarize them in a drawn out results section. It would be good to show quotes and then discuss their relevance. Now it is hard for the reader to follow and discern the relevance of what the authors are telling. Furthermore, there seems to be a lot of redundancy in the paper, especially in the section on what the online contact contributes to, which also seems to blend analysis with discussion.

The authors should also have a native speaker go through the text and make corrections. There are many awkward sentence structures and grammatical errors.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**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.