Reviewer's report

Title: Evaluation of data completeness in the electronic health record for the purpose of patient recruitment into clinical trials: a retrospective analysis of element presence

Version: 2 Date: 7 December 2012

Reviewer: John Ainsworth

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Major Compulsory Revisions

1. In Para 5 of the Methods Section, the authors state that "The calculation included all patients admitted in the fourth quarter of 2011 to the clinical department that conducted the trial." We can expect some patients to be not eligible for a trial, because they do not have a specific condition. The absence of a condition is normally not recorded, and so would be missing data. The authors need to discuss how this may affect the results. They may want to consider including a calculation for all patients recruited into a clinical trial in the clinical departments in the fourth quarter of 2011 and presenting these results in Tables 2 & 3.

2. The method described for matching patient characteristics to EHR data elements is not systematic and the outcome is unlikely to be repeatable. The authors should explain in more detail the steps taken to avoid this problem or discuss the sensitivity of the results to the mapping.

3. Some data elements in any given EHR system will be mandatory for entry of a valid value e.g. gender. The authors should explain the impact this may have on the results.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.