Reviewer’s report

Title: The feasibility of using pattern recognition software to measure the influence of computer use on the consultation.

Version: 1 Date: 9 October 2003

Reviewer: Frank Sullivan

Reviewer’s report:

1. Comments
a) Discretionary Revisions

The article is longer than necessary to convey the information contained within it. The introduction is rather diffuse and might be more precisely focused on the issue being studied: ‘…measuring the influence of computer use in the consultation.’

Conversely, the methods and results sections of the summary are underwritten. The former does not make it clear that simulated consultations are being studied and the latter fails to describe to potential readers the key findings on automated recording and counting of the 4 movements captured.

Figures 1 and 2 add little and could be removed.

The original paper in reference 26 is
Campbell LM, Sullivan FM, Murray TS.
Video recording of general practitioner consultations—the effect on patient satisfaction.
BMJ 1995; 311:326-7

b) Minor Compulsory Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Typographical errors
Pages not numbered
In para. 4 of Background clinicians should be clinician’s.
In para. 9 of Background (end of section on ‘What is known about the impact….’ It should read
…’doctors who use computers during their consultations.’

c) Major Compulsory Revisions

More of the discussion should explain to readers how what has been measured is important and what unmeasured parameters are not accessed by this method.

Figure 8 displays data from another study altogether. It should be omitted.

2. Questions
How do the contents of this paper differ from ref 6 (in press)?
Could figure 8 be replaced by data from the simulated consultations?
How do the authors know that the counts generated by the system are accurate?

What dimensions of ‘influence of computer use in the consultation’ would it be desirable to capture but impossible using their pattern recognition software?

What next?: Accept after minor compulsory revisions
Level of interest: An article of importance in its specialized field or of broad interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

None