Reviewer's report

Title: A computer decision aid for medical prevention: a pilot qualitative study of the Personalized Estimate of Risks (EsPeR) system.

Version: 1 Date: 31 August 2003

Reviewer: Jonathan Wald

Reviewer's report:

General
Overall, I enjoyed reading this paper. It addresses the important area of using qualitative methods at appropriate points throughout the conceptualization and development of improved systems of care, and outlines some of the steps that were taken as the EsPeR system is being developed.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
There was reference to the issue of time constraints -- how much time physicians would have to use the system -- in the conclusion of the Abstract and elsewhere (indirectly). It would be helpful if the authors would discuss how long the EsPeR system would take to use (based on their qualitative data if possible), and how long they believed it _should_ take to use.

I was not able to review Figure 1 references as "in the attached power point file".

Table 2 was not completely understood by me. Perhaps including at least one more detailed description in the text of the report would help in that area.

I would like to hear (in the manuscript) something about what is motivating physicians to do this, and how that is changing with time (accelerating? decelerating).

Minor Compulsory Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
I had trouble understanding certain sentences and noticed many grammatical errors and unclear expressions. For example: "Overall, the physicians perceived the system as useful but sometimes disturbing". Yet I did not find additional comments that explain what was "disturbing", so I was left to guess. Another sentence read: "There are several explanations to the deceptive finding:..." I think I understood the point, but had to re-read it a few times to do so. The few sentences just before the Conclusion, which begin: "Our computerized approach for assisting them in setting rational priorities..." was not easy to understand. I did not understand what it was saying.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
None

Advice on publication: Accept after minor compulsory revisions

Level of interest: A paper whose findings are important to those with closely related research
interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Declaration of competing interests:
None