Reviewer's report

Title: Evaluation of PROforma as a language for implementing medical guidelines in a practical context.

Version: 1 Date: 7 December 2005

Reviewer: silvana quaglini

Reviewer's report:

General

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. The background section must contain also some information about the healthcare organisation of the country where the study has been carried. Which are the responsibilities of the pharmacists and of the GPs? Are each patient addressed to a single pharmacist or does he address more than one?
2. Some essential data about the study are lacking: How many pharmacists accepted to be part of the study? How many patients? Which is the perceived utility if the system?
3. It is not clear if the web interface is a utility provided by PROFORMA or it has been built by the authors from scratch. To this concern, the reader should be greatly facilitated by some pictures showing the user interface
4. The authors say that pharmacists get the patients data. There are no privacy problems? Which subset of the EPR is shared between GP and Pharmacists?
5. The paper lacks from examples: when they say "The study revealed a number of weaknesses in PROforma's logical adequacy ...", the authors should provide at least one example, and the same for the other weaknesses encountered.
6. About the heuristic power, the authors say that probably the implemented guideline was too simple: they should try with a more complex one!!
7. About the comparison of PROforma with Java and Pascal, I don't understand this comparison: PROforma is not a programming language. This point should be clarified, i.e. which is the role of the PROforma language within the guideline representation.
8. About UML, again I suggest to make an example (with pictures) showing a situation in which UML diagram performs better than PROforma graph.

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

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

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What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests