Reviewer’s report

Title: Evidence for handheld electronic medication records in improving care: a systematic review

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Reviewer: D Stengel

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First, I have to apologize for any delay in commenting on this interesting manuscript. There is few I can say- the authors conducted a thorough review of the literature in multiple databases, attempted to include papers written in languages other than English, judged the methodological quality of identified work, provided a QUOROM flowchart and so on. Well done.

Limited evidence from RCTs supports the use of PDAs in hospitals for daily documentation- at a glance, this appears to be insufficient information to justify publication. Indeed, it is extremely valuable information- it is up to both medical and administration professionals to determine the value of handheld computing in a scientific manner, at best, in a large scale RCT.

I wonder whether the authors are aware of recruitment rates or even results of the American RCT announced in the Lancet a couple of years ago.

I have to admit that, as an author of one of the papers included in this review, I am susceptible to enthusiasm on this topic. The lack of RCT may point towards the simple fact that PDAs are cheap, easy to handle, and widely accepted. Doctors used to mobile computing will hardly return to paperwork. Like laparoscopic cholecystectomy, e-documentation may represent an intervention that has established itself as a standard prior to rigorous evaluation. However, the authors stress the need for focusing on patient-centered endpoints, and I fully agree with this proposal.

What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

None declared