Reviewer's report

Title: Instruments to assess the perception of physicians in the decision-making process of specific clinical encounters: a systematic review

Version: 1 Date: 14 August 2007

Reviewer: Martin Dawes

Reviewer's report:

General

Abstract – well written.

Methods
Two languages chosen. A number of databases did not include the starting date of the search.
Selection criteria were self-administered instrument evaluating physicians’ perceptions.
The individuals who abstracted data was identified at the end of the document – this could have been in the methods section? The search process was robust and transparent. The selection process was equally clear with explicit exclusion and inclusion criteria. Data abstraction was performed independently by two people as was quality assessment

Results
Figure 1 is very clear and self-explanatory about selection and searching. Table 1 lists the tools evaluated and Tables two & three provide the initial reported validity assessment of these tools and quality assessment of those papers using a modified STARD.
The text matches but does not duplicate the tables. The discussion puts the results into context, describing the relevance of the work as well as the limitations.

References: Seem to match tables but I did not check every one.

Overall this is a good review of an important topic for researchers. It is highly appropriate for this journal where a lot of material on decision making is published.

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

None

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of
I would expand the titles of tables to allow the reader to understand - for example that the scoring in Table 3 was STARD modified performed on 10 articles describing the use of a decision making assessment tool etc - without having to read the whole text. It took me a second or two even after reading the text to understand that these were the papers across the top of the 1st row.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

I was not quite clear about your overall finding and I think you could be more clear. It seems there are a number of tools - that was clear. Are they context specific - I was not certain. Do they work well - some seem to - but you did not really say so. However it appears from the STARD that none of them have been reliably assessed? as you are one of the most expert groups in the world. I would expect you to be able to either tell me these three or four seem the most promising, perhaps with some limits, - or that the quality of the published work was so low you can't tell me. At the moment all I am left with is the list. Your expert opinion would be useful to readers.

What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions

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