Reviewer’s report

Title: Evidence-Based Medicine among Internal Medicine Residents in a Community Hospital Program Using Wireless Mobile Devices.

Version: 1 Date: 5 December 2006

Reviewer: Pierre PLUYE

Reviewer’s report:

GENERAL
The present manuscript describes interesting results regarding the use of a new device (smartphones) in a community hospital, notably for information retrieval purpose, and the self-reported impact of wireless clinical information retrieval technology. However, authors must respond to major compulsory revisions before a decision on publication can be reached.

MAJOR COMPULSORY REVISIONS
The manuscript starts with a background section, and the general problem is “information is not being used effectively in health care” (last sentence, first paragraph). Then, the manuscript summarizes some HARRIS surveys and empirical studies on the use of Internet, the use of wireless systems, the use of PDAs and doctors’ information needs. On the top of the third page the specific problem may be that wireless networks “are usually not available in many community hospitals,” and that information needs “are as much or even greater than those serving in the major teaching centers”. Smartphones may offer a solution to “this challenge.”

There are too many problems and an unclear problem. The notion “effective” information use is not defined, and the relationships with the absence of wireless networks and information needs are not explained. Authors will certainly agree that their interesting cohort study with 60 residents cannot certainly solve all these problems. There are no research questions and no objectives, thus the reader will think OK, but so what?

Therefore, this manuscript should be focussed and clarified. (1) Why this study is important or what is the problem this study will contribute to solve? E.g. “there are no studies on the use and impact of smartphones” or “information needs are not met with desktop stations”. (2) What is the research question that this manuscript may answer or what is the objective that it may fulfill? E.g. “the present study aims to…”

The problem and the question or the general objective should be written up-front in the first paragraph (introduction) to answer basic readers’ questions: Why? What? Then, the background section will support the problem and may refine the objectives into specific objectives that may be fulfilled with the empirical study. There should be a strong coherence between the problem, the question/objective, and results.

In sum, once this is clarified, I will be happy to re-review this manuscript. Other comments are merely superficial, and can be easily addressed.

MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISIONS
• Page 3, “a recent study” refers to a 1995 paper.
• In the background section, a framework defining basic concepts of information retrieval may improve the coherence of the results that are mostly about the use, and self-reported usefulness and impact of information.
• Results: Terms like “effective” and “effectiveness” should be defined.
• Discussion: The methodological limitation is not only the lack of randomization, but may also be seen as a lack of qualitative data analysis that may help better understand the use and impact of smartphones.
• References: Since my name will appear as Dr Pierre PLUYE on the present report, I suggest the typo error may be corrected in the list of references (“Pluyea”).
• Tables: The numerical N should appear in tables 2, 3, 4 and 6 (not only %).

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