Reviewer's report

Title: Clinical decision support tools: analysis of online drug information databases

Version: 2 Date: 9 February 2007

Reviewer: Paul Taylor

Reviewer's report:

General

There are two major disagreements between me and the authors. First I felt that the element of novelty here, that the accessed databases are on-line, was not significant, given that there have been reviews of widely disseminated electronic databases. I am prepared to concede that I may have under-estimated the difference that this makes to users.

My second point was that this paper does not really seem to be about decision support. Clearly clinicians could use these systems to support decision making, but actually they use all their systems to support decision-making, decision support has to mean something more specific. Nor does the evaluation really assess the impact or potential impact of the systems on decision-making. My reservations, on this count, haven't really been addressed by the authors, but I'm prepared to accept, if the other referees support publication, that publication is appropriate.

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

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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)

I still believe that the paper would be strengthened if the authors clarified the process by which questions are devised. For example they could give some sense of the size of the database of queries kept by NSUDIC and give sense of the selection process. It would help to clarify how many pharmacists were involved in the review.

This is a minor point: the limitations section includes the statement that the different databases are updated with varying frequency. If you know the frequency with which each is updated, you should say so, since this is highly significant information. If you do not, then you do not know that they updated with varying frequency.

What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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