Reviewer's report

Title: An iconic language for the graphical representation of information about signs, diseases, physiological states, life habits, drugs, clinical and laboratory tests

Version: 1 Date: 2 January 2008

Reviewer: Stefan J Darmoni

Reviewer's report:

Minor Essential Revisions

In the Results section, percentages should be followed by the standard deviation. At this end of the first sentence of page 11, please repeat what statistical test was used.

I suggest to the authors to discuss more in detail the fact that the training to learn VCM is quite long (2-7h) and not at all intuitive. Therefore, I suggest to modify the first sentence of the Discussion section, which states that the language is easy to use. According to me, it is clearly the opposite.

The authors should also mention that the evaluators are not randomly chosen GPs but trainers of GP students. Then, the results of the evaluation may underestimate the time to learn VCM and also generate bias to the main results of this study.

I will also attend that the authors develop in the discussion section the granularity of the VCM classification vs several thesauri or classification (e.g. MeSH, ICD 10) which contains from 10,000 terms to several hundred thousand terms which can not be represented by VCM.

Finally, the time spent to learn the VCM language is the main drawback of this study. The authors should be clearly mention how they imagine a broad utilisation of this language if it is freely available on the Internet.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'