Reviewer's report

Title: A Stimulus to Define Informatics and Health Information Technology

Version: 1 Date: 27 April 2009

Reviewer: Elske Ammenwerth

Reviewer's report:

The paper presents definitions of major terms used in biomedical and health informatics. The author argues that "people outside HIT do not understand our terminology", and this may "lead to confusion that could have had dire consequences".

The paper consequently presents a narrative introduction to terms like informatics, bioinformatics, health information management, electronic medical record, personal health record, RHIO, telemedicine, eHealth, EBM, IT professional etc.

Health informatics in facts have a certain need for definition of basic terms (such as health informatics, EPR, PHR, ehealth etc.). Therefore, I really support any clear(er) definitions of health informatics related terms.

After reading the paper I have some questions:

1. What is the overall motivation for the paper? The authors argue that unclear definitions definition may have "dire consequences". The authors seem to have made certain experiences here, but this is unfortunately not presented. It would be very interesting to find a more detailed explanation of the need for a clear definitions of terms. This would help the reader to understand the significance of the contribution.

2. Many definition are not very specific, e.g. EPR, eHealth, and for some of the definitons, no sources are given. For an expert and scientific reader, this seems not quite satisfactory. For a non-expert reader, does this really help to better understand our field? Overall, what is the expected audience of this paper? If it is oriented towards politicians and other non-experts, is BMC then the good place of publication for this?

3. The narrative structure of the paper makes it difficult to find terms of interest. I remember the paper by Wyatt 2002 (basic conepts in health informaitcs), they chose a more structured presentation that makes it easier to quickly access individual terms. It may be helpful to consider adding an appendix of all terms with their detailed definitions.

4. For a debate paper, I would have expected to see a discussion of conflicting definitions, before the authors come with their own definitions. But in fact the paper does not presents the discussion, but just the outcome. This makes the
reader feeling a bit uneasy, feeling: if there is no discussion on the presented terms, why what do I need this paper for?

**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.