Reviewer's report

Title: Development of a Validation Algorithm for 'Present on Admission' Flagging

Version: 2 Date: 26 March 2009

Reviewer: Alex Bottle

Reviewer's report:

Summary

This is a useful study on an important theme in the area of maximising the use of routine data for quality assessment that I hope will help to convince the UK that we need a POA flag here! The review of codes seems thorough and I’m glad to see that there was a medical reviewer on hand. I have only some small comments to make. The example codes (e.g. DM with renal failure) that demonstrate the issues in the Discussion are welcome.

Minor Essential Revisions

When comparing the inter-rater reliability, it is usual to calculate the kappa statistic (Fleiss’s kappa for more than two raters) and this should be added.

I hadn’t heard of Victoria’s ‘PAMC’ system (where C means not POA) and a summary of the different kinds of POA-type flags in use around the world would be useful, together with the authors’ views on what other countries should adopt, e.g. how are (or might be) the ‘A’ flagged codes used in Australia?

Minor comments (discretionary revisions)

Ref [32] isn’t really valid as a ref, so I suggest just leaving it out.
You ought to say that the attached cleaning algorithm is a SAS program.
In the Background section, please explain the meaning of ‘clinical edits’.

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’