Reviewer's report

Title: Assessment of ePrescription quality: an observational study at three mail-order pharmacies

Version: 1 Date: 29 August 2008

Reviewer: Brian Quilliam

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Overall, this study focused on a timely and important topic, namely some of the inefficiencies that may exist with the implementation of a wide-spread e-prescription system. Despite the merits of this study, the manuscript would benefit substantially from a number of revisions, including:

Discretionary Revisions:

1. Consider rounding the estimates to one decimal place.

2. Consider deleting Figure 1 altogether and expanding the message derived from the figure in the text. As is, the figure adds little to the manuscript.

Minor Essential Revisions:

1. The term “clarification contact” utilized throughout is awkward. Please expand/revise this term to make the outcome of interest more readily apparent to the reader.

2. In the results section of the abstract, please remove the word “increased” from the statement “The increased rate ratio (RR) for clarification contacts for new ePrescriptions…” as this is unnecessary and potentially leading the reader.

3. Should Figure 1 remain, the statement “The development of ePrescriptions in Sweden…” may be better worded as “Trends in the use of ePrescriptions in Sweden…”.

4. In the methods section, it is not entirely clear why the 4th MOP was excluded and how this site differed from the other 3 included sites. This is an essential revision and the reason for exclusion of this site based on sound methodology should be apparent to the reader.

5. In the methods “setting” section, please confirm that the number of non-pharmacy outlets and the other community pharmacies were both ~900 (or is this a typo?).

6. On page 6, you state the MOPs differ from other pharmacies as they do not have “face to face” contact with patients. On page 8, you mention “consulting with the patient…” as an option. I am assuming that this is via phone, however, directly stating the modes of communication possible would be helpful to the
reader.

7. In table 2, the * indicating statistical significance is not necessary given the Confidence intervals are presented.

8. Table 1 is confusing as presented. It would be helpful to the reader if the prescriptions were presented following their natural order, that is 1. Total prescriptions 2. Total E-prescriptions 3. Total Non-E-prescriptions and then subcategories under each of these for new and refills. Also, percentages throughout would be helpful.

9. Table 3 would benefit from the inclusion of percentages.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The nature of the funding by Apoteket AB must be more fully disclosed. Was the grant an unrestricted educational grant? As much detail as possible regarding the nature of the relationship between the authors and the funding source is essential to the readership. Further, it is unclear of the relationship between Apoteket AB and the 3 included MOPs. If there is a relationship, this must also be disclosed. Lastly, the source of “data” on file from Apoteket AB is not fully highlighted. As presented, the source of this data is unclear and since it is not published, as much information as possible regarding the source, type, and any other information regarding these estimates is essential for transparency.

2. As written, the discussion section is suboptimal and only a brief summary of this study’s findings in isolation. To my knowledge, several other studies have looked at the unintended effects of the e-prescribing in other countries. The discussion section must be expanded detailing what other studies have found on this topic (as well as related topics) and how this is in support/contrast to the findings of this study. This section should be the bulk of the discussion and will assist the reader in assessing how this study adds to what we already know about this area and what gaps still exist in this knowledge.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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.