Reviewer’s report

Title: What is known about the patient’s experience of medical tourism? A scoping review

Version: 1 Date: 8 June 2010

Reviewer: Rita R Baeten

Reviewer’s report:

1. The paper is well written, the applied methodology is solid, rigorously applied and well explained. It provides a good overview about what is known, and what is not known on the issue. The discussion and conclusions are well balanced.

Some major, compulsory revisions:

2. The scope of the article is on medical tourism, which has been defined as travel abroad with the express intention of obtaining non-emergency medical services. Expatriates who return home to access care and established cross-border care arrangements between proximal countries are not considered as forms of medical tourism. It is however not clarified why these two categories have been excluded. Expatriates not only receive care at home when on visit, but often also intentionally return home for care. Patient mobility in border regions fits exactly in the definition as it has been formulated for medical tourism. This bias has an impact on the kind of listed motives: people going abroad because of proximity and familiarity are not mentioned. Please refine/clarify the definition or expand the scope of the study.

3. The authors state that only 5 sources reported on empirical studies involved the collection of primary data. However, nowhere it is made clear which these 5 are, nor which part of the analysis is based on these reports. No clear distinction is made between sources of a different quality (media vs academic research). As a consequence, it is not always clear whether the findings are empirical or speculative (e.g. travel related risks: are these potential risks or actually experienced risks)? Please clarify.

Discretionary revisions:

4. Rather surprisingly, the search strategy did not include keywords such as patient mobility and cross border care. As a consequence, some documents, for instance the documents below, providing an overview of studies on the patient perspective were not found:

Helena Legido-Quigley, Martin McKee, Ellen Nolte and Irene A Glinos, Assuring quality of health care in the European Union

Could you clarify/justify selection of research terms or expand them?

5. In the decision making and motivations section it might be relevant to make a distinction between factors leading to the decision why to go abroad vs why choose a specific country/provider, and on the other hand facilitating factors (what made it possible to realise the wish to go abroad).

6. The section on implications for health service providers deals only with the domestic provider, not with the treating provider abroad. Could you please explain why or complement?

7. The discussions part on implications for patients could be better structured.

8. About the title: wouldn’t it be more appropriate to speak about the patients’ perspective, rather than the patients’ experience, since almost nothing seems to be known about the patients’ experience?

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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