Reviewer’s report

Title: Evaluation of an open access echocardiography service in the Netherlands: a cohort study of indications, outcomes, patient management and trends

Version: 1 Date: 15 September 2009

Reviewer: R.A. Verheij

Reviewer’s report:

I think this is an interesting descriptive study on the use of an open access cardiology service in the Netherlands. I have some comment that can be regarded as minor essential revisions.

1. English language leaves room for improvement.

2. I would appreciate some more reflection on the impact of this service on the health care system as a whole.

3. The question how can it be avoided that GPs become less strict in their indications is not addressed.

4. Economic aspects are completely neglected; who paid for the service; what were the costs; was it cost efficient? The authors claim that the service is efficient. Efficiency is about benefits and costs, but this study only hardly addresses the costs.

5. Is the Heerlen region the only region in which this service is offered? How many other hospitals offer a similar service?

6. I do not understand why cardiologists gave advice in only half of the cases.

7. I find the number of cases in which the GP does not adhere to the specialist’ advice rather high. This is hardly commented.

8. The authors may have a conflict of interest. As some of them work at the hospital where the echocardiography service is provided.

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'