Reviewer’s report

Title: The effect of the COACH program (Continuity Of Appropriate pharmacotherapy, patient Counselling and information transfer in Healthcare) on readmission rates in a multicultural population of internal medicine patients

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Reviewer: Dan Berlowitz

Reviewer’s report:

This manuscript describes an experiment to determine whether an intervention that focuses on medication reconciliation and enhanced communication can result in a reduction in readmissions among hospitalized patients. The study is structured as a before-after study. Therefore, it will be impossible to separate out changes in readmission rates that are due to the intervention from temporal trends. The authors do justify the approach, though, and alternate approaches also suffer from limitations. There are a number of areas, though, in which the manuscript could be improved.

The authors must further emphasize what is unique about their intervention. The approach seems similar to the reengineered hospital discharge process tested in a randomized trial by Jack et al (see Annals of Internal Medicine 2009; 150: 178-187). That study demonstrated significant reductions in hospital utilization. What new things will we learn from this new study?

It is mentioned in one area of the manuscript that the study is exempt from IRB review, yet it says elsewhere that informed consent will be obtained from study subjects. This seems contradictory. Issues regarding the protection of human subjects should be clearly discussed.

The figures are poorly labeled and described. There appears to be a figure 3 but the text references figures 3a and 3b. This needs clarification.

Many abbreviations are used without being first described. The authors should carefully review their use of abbreviations such as SLAZ and ITS.

Additional justification should be provided for the estimated reductions in hospital readmission rates from the intervention. The effect being tested in the power analysis potentially seems too great.

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