Reviewer’s report

**Title:** The importance of primary care as a multidimensional concept: a systematic literature review.

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 25 October 2009

**Reviewer:** Marie-Dominique Beaulieu

**Reviewer’s report:**

This is a very important article that will be useful to researchers in the primary care field as well as to decision-makers. The authors have to be commended for having realised this overwhelming task of reviewing the literature on the effects of primary care. The framework they propose (the 10 attributes organised under Donnabedian’s classical framework) is meaningful and useful. The tables succeed in summarising the key findings.

I have only one reservation that I think can be addressed by the authors. I do not agree with the statement they make on page 6 that "Given the strong reliance of this study on literature reviews and the heterogeneity of the topic, it was unnecessary to perform a quality appraisal of the evidence". For many dimensions, the evidence comes from original studies- sometimes only from one as it is the case for equity. Also: there are criteria to evaluate the quality of systematic reviews. I realized that it is difficult to summarise a rating of the quality of the evidence and to integrate it into the paper. But it can be done. I had the opportunity to participate to a systematic review on the same question that was not cited since it was not published in the peer reviewed literature (Lamarche, P., Beaulieu MD, Pineault R. et al. Choices for Change : The Path for Restructuring Primary Healthcare Services in Canada. Report. Canadian Health Services Research Foundation November 2003) and we found a way to give some insights on the quality of the evidence we used.

Sincerely
Marie-Dominique Beaulieu

**Level of interest:** An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.