Reviewer's report

**Title:** Does the process map influence the outcome of quality improvement work? A comparison of a sequential flow diagram and a hierarchical task analysis diagram

**Version:** 2 **Date:** 17 September 2009

**Reviewer:** Vijaya Sundararajan

**Reviewer's report:**

This is a well described and interesting study focusing on how the manner in which information is displayed affects the reasoning of clinicians regarding patient safety issues. Ancillary questions involve qualitative feedback on clinician perception of the usefulness of the displays and on principles to optimize the development of the displays.

The methods, in general are well described, particularly to a reader who is not familiar with the external representations of healthcare process used. The data are sound and the authors have made an effort to conduct a comprehensive, albeit preliminary study.

Minor Essential Reviews:
Bottom of page 8: The section ‘Procedure’ may benefit from being separated into different paragraphs based on whether they refer to the pilot or the study. Further, this section should precede the ‘Participants’ section. (Pilot information before study information).
Bottom of page 9: An analysis section would be helpful, separated into qualitative and quantitative.
Qualitative: please describe more fully what is meant by ‘inductive thematic analysis’.
Quantitative: if the authors wish to use quantitative methods on this small sample, they should describe the methods used here. Later in the text is information (middle page 10) that ‘sign test comparing the…’. Was this the Wilcoxon Sign Rank Test? If so was each of the 7 participant responses for the two methods compared? Also worth considering is whether there is a real need for quantitative methods in the small sample.

In terms of reporting the results, the authors have been clear. One query is whether the participant responses differed based on whether they were the 2 administrators or the 5 pharmacists?

The discussion is very good. A point which I find to be salient, which is brought out, but could be stressed even more is that there may be 3 ways to think through the risk of safety issues in a model of care: interviews, process/flow diagrams and HTA. Although it is stressed that a more iterative procedure is needed to bound the flow diagrams and HTA appropriately, it is nonetheless
striking that concerns about ‘Co-ordination across healthcare boundary’ were mainly voiced at the interviews.

Other than as noted above the limitations are clearly stated, the authors fully acknowledge work on which they build, the title is clear and descriptive, and the abstract good. The writing is very good.

**Level of interest:** An article of insufficient interest to warrant publication in a scientific/medical journal

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.