Reviewer's report

Title: Quantifying culture gaps between physicians and managers in Dutch hospitals: a survey

Version: 1 Date: 8 June 2009

Reviewer: Elizabeth Meerabeau

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Major Compulsory Revisions

1. I found this paper difficult to understand, for three reasons. Firstly, the English is not very good in several places (I am afraid I cannot comment in detail on this). This becomes crucial, for example, when the authors refer to bottlenecks, as it is not clear what they mean. Secondly, much of the paper discusses the statistical findings in considerable detail, but it is not clear what overall conclusions the authors draw from their findings, or how they set their findings in the context of the literature on cultural differences. Thirdly, the paper tries to cover three studies; this is too much material for a single paper.

2. The background section on P5 has many unsupported statements, for example the frequent criticism from physicians about bureaucratisation.

3. It is not clear how the literature was searched.

4. There needs to be a stronger discussion of the methodological issue of whether the scores on questionnaires such as the one used are a reflection of actual practice. At present it is rather assumed that the findings reflect ‘reality’.

5. The main questionnaire by Kralewski was previously used solely with doctors, not between professional groups, and it is not clear why it was used for this study; its conceptual model is decision-making in uncertainty. The questionnaire has been modified to include ‘present’ and ‘preferred’ situation. This in not ‘time-based’ (p8) as the preferred situation may not necessarily occur in the future. The authors have also tried to adapt the questionnaire to a Dutch setting. There is no discussion of whether these modifications were approved by Kralewski, nor how they were tested for validity.

6. Detailed points about methods, which belong in that section are found in other places in the text, e.g. in the literature review (background) on p6 and p7, and the discussion on p16, and conclusion on p20.

7. The discussion of the development of the questionnaire requires a view from a statistician. The table of results are also difficult for a general reader to understand.

8. In the results section (p14) the claim that the results are representative needs to take into account factors such as whether, for example, participants in urban
hospitals were more or less likely to respond.

9. The discussion is not easy to understand. On p18 the authors claim that the study provides evidence, but on p17 the discussion seems to state that Krawlewski’s questionnaire did not work well in this study (and therefore presumably the findings are dubious).

10. Several points in the discussion (e.g. p19) would perhaps be clearer in the results section.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

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