Reviewer's report

Title: Factors affecting the use of patient survey data for quality improvement in the Veterans Health Administration

Version: 3 Date: 11 August 2011

Reviewer: Michelle Hendriks

Reviewer's report:

The manuscript has improved a lot. The authors have responded satisfactory to most of my previous concerns. I have a few comments left which mainly concern the discussion section.

Major compulsory revisions

1. Background (last paragraph): as suggested the authors link their hypotheses to the 3 study goals. I, however, do not understand the relationship between 'the types of support to be determined' and the hypotheses that 'improvement strategies are multi-stage and iterative' (goal 2).

2. Discussion: Although the authors acknowledge the limitations of their study to a larger extent, I still miss some comments in this regard:
   a. Last sentence, 1st paragraph: this sentence is misleading. The results show that the authors felt the differences were big enough to distinguish between high and low performing facilities, only the difference appeared to be the other way around. More reflection is needed.
   b. Limitations: I would (again) mention that the data did not allow to answer goal 3 of the study.

3. Discussion, comparison other findings: this paragraph repeats the results of some previous studies. This information is already provided in the background and I miss the direct comparison. It should not be left to the readers to make this comparison for themselves. It is only mentioned that patient involvement was also not prominent in the present study.

Minor essential revisions

1. For me it is still not clear how the 6 facilities were selected. It is now clear why it was difficult to select improving facilities, but why not also 2 stable low performers for instance? The selection procedure seems quit random.

2. Discussion, implications future research: the authors provide several recommendations to improve the response rate among staff members. I miss suggestions to convince the directors of facilities to participate in the first place.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
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