Reviewer's report

Title: Counting on commitment; the quality of primary care-led diabetes management in a system with minimal incentives

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Reviewer: John McKnight

Reviewer's report:

This report describes results relating to diabetes care in three selected groups of General Practices in Ireland and compares their results to the England and Wales National Diabetes Audit and the Scottish Diabetes Survey. In their conclusion they generalise their results to 'Ireland' and they cannot justify this from their study.

The Scottish Diabetes Survey is a comprehensive dataset including 237,000 patients with diabetes covering the whole population whereas this description is of 3010 patients from selected groups of practices and may not be at all representative of care in 'Ireland'. It would be reasonable to describe the project as a comparison of three managed areas in Ireland, but from the data provided there is no justification for suggesting this can occur across the whole country.

It would be interesting to have some description of how the three systems work, what proportion of Irish practices they represent and how other practices or groups work if there is to be any generalising of the findings.

The above is a major flaw in the description and it should not be published without correction of this.

Methods, page 6 needs to have some description of how the practices are organised with training and support. What size are the practices for example - 63 practices (what size?) only 50 patients per practice (what is the prevalence of diabetes in their practices? What is the case ascertainment? One might expect around 4 to 5% of people in Ireland to have diabetes (as per Scotland). If the prevalence in each practice is much less this is a potential problem.

They quote the Scottish diabetes survey from 2008 and have difficulty using this as it is not stratified for diabetes type. The 2009 survey has similar data for comparison and is diabetes type stratified. It would be reasonable to use this as a comparator rather than the 2008 despite the slight time difference this would create - the data in 2008 and 2009 has a similar 'performance' for the measures described in this manuscript.

In many ways the whole comparison is flawed as this is comparing an interested group of practices that are managed with a total population described from Scotland. I believe the English and Welsh data is voluntary and could therefore not be representative of the whole population.
Table 3 and other tables - having Ireland at the top of the column is very misleading as described above. The same applies to the reference to Ireland at the top of page 17 vs Netherlands.

The points about overall healthcare systems and financial incentives for those without a special interest compared to special interest groups may well be valid but cannot be made from the data provided in the text.

**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'