Reviewer's report

Title: Instrumental and Socioemotional Communications in Doctor-Patient Interactions in Urban and Rural Clinics

Version: 2 Date: 30 April 2012

Reviewer: Nicole NE Ernstmann

Reviewer's report:

Dear authors,

The manuscript “Instrumental and Socioemotional Communications in Doctor-Patient Interactions in Urban and Rural Clinics” addresses an interesting and innovative topic since there is a body of literature to patient-physician-interaction in terms of shared decision making, met and unmet information needs, or physicians’ empathy in single consultations, but little is known to the impact of long term relationships between patient and physician. A strong and trustful therapeutic alliance is supposed to result in better outcomes, e.g. open disclosure, patient empowerment, or treatment confidence. The manuscript is therefore an important contribution to develop models and provide evidence in this field.

The following aspects should be addressed in a major compulsory revision of the manuscript:

Background:
1) The section is well written and coherent. However, there should be an explicit research question and study aim at the end of the section to allow the reader to put the following methods sections in context.

Methods:
2) Many details are missing in the methods section. The authors should report study methods according to the consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ) (International Journal for Quality in Health Care; Volume 19, Number 6: pp. 349–357).
3) Table 1 presents study results and should be placed in the results section.

Results:
4) All results should be presented anonymously.
5) Where are the results of the 42 interviews presented?

Discussion:
6) In the limitations section, the effect of the observer knowing the hypotheses (about the expected frequency of each communication style in the rural vs. urban setting) should be discussed. This is a major limitation.
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.