Reviewer's report

Title: The effect of an active implementation of a disease management programme for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease on healthcare utilization - A cluster-randomised controlled trial

Version: 2 Date: 3 July 2013

Reviewer: Annemarije L Kruis

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions.
The authors have clarified almost all points and inserted some major text and tables.

However, I feel the authors are salami-publishing their outcomes, as there is a trend to split up research results into smaller parts that are published separately, thus increasing the number of publications. I do not see at all why health care utilization, EQ-5D and the PACIC should result in three different papers as they all target the same population. Therefore I advise this paper only to be published if the authors report on all their outcomes in one paper, reducing the salami-publishing in science. If they go on at reporting only health care utilization, my personal opinion would be not to be published.

I let it to the editors to decide on this point if they want to publish the paper in this version including only health care utilization or if the authors require to provide all outcomes in one paper before they can go on publishing.

Minor essential revisions
1. Thank you for clarifying the COPD population. However for clarity it would probably more clear to move all the text regarding your study population in one section. Now there is text about the population under “Study design” (last 2 sentences), under “Setting” (last 2 sentences) and Patients and the COPD algorithm, which makes the reader had to jump to different sections to understand the population.

2. The authors describe they didn’t have access to the spirometry data of their patients in order to select and define their population and therefore had to rely on self-reporting COPD. This is in contrast to Table 2 in which they report on the number of patients who had a spirometry performed at the GP practice in different years of follow-up, which suggests there was access to spirometry data.

3. Text under Methods/Participants section consists of results: whole text from “the intervention group counted 48 patients…. to (Figure 1)”. Please move to results.

4. Typos in Methods section, patients and the COPD algorithm please check and possible change text according to this:
“The patients were selected either because they had been hospitalised during the past five years with a lung-related diagnosis, had redeemed prescriptions on lung medication at least twice during the past year or had had their lung function tested at their GP on two different occasions during the past year. “For the sup(p=b)-group analysis we wanted to examine the effectiveness of the intervention and therefore allocated the patients from the two practices that declined the invitation to participate to the control group; the sub-group with this distribution of patients we called the AT population.

**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