Reviewer's report

Title: Implementing a service charter for an integrated regional stroke service: an exploratory case study

Version: 2 Date: 5 November 2013

Reviewer: Kris Vanhaecht

Reviewer's report:

This paper describes a case study in the Netherlands on Service Charters which is an important topic within the "patient centered" dimension of Quality. The concept of service charters is not new to healthcare management but this case study presents the findings of the cross boundary pathway for stroke patients including 5 different organizations. The findings are interesting for the target group of BMC HSR as it presents 7 categories and 27 properties that could be helpful for both researchers and healthcare managers (in hospital and in primary care). The findings are based on stroke care but can be interesting for other patient groups.

My suggestion is to accept this paper with Discretionary Revisions as it adds value to the knowledge and evidence base on patient centered care and is important in the field of health services research. The study is well conducted and presented in a clear way.

I would like to suggest 2 discretionary revisions:

1) in the methods it could be helpful to include a second figure in which you present the care-chain and provide some information on the involved organizations and the persons you interviewed

2) in the discussion I would suggest to add a paragraph about the limitation that you present a study on service charters in the field of patient centered care without including patients but focus on healthcare professionals. I would like to read about your idea how to include patients and family members in this type of research.

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'