Reviewer’s report

Title: Adapting developing country methodology to improve the quality of health needs assessments

Version: 1 Date: 19 November 2004

Reviewer: martin gulliford

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Adapting developing country methodology to improve the quality of health needs assessments. SM Smith et al.

This paper outlines an approach to conducting health needs assessments which may be of interest to public health practitioners.

Major compulsory revisions

At present the paper suffers from the limitation that it includes very few data. The authors make the point that a study must provide robust, epidemiologically sound data but they have not shown that this has been achieved. The findings of their work have been outlined very briefly in qualitative terms but the illustrations given are limited in scope.

The description of the implementation of the method requires more quantitative detail concerning the outcome(s) of interest, design effect, sample size determination, cluster size selection etc.

Without providing this additional material, the paper could be viewed as more of a commentary rather than a primary research paper or methodological study.

Discretionary revisions

I had a reservation about the term ‘developing country methodology’. What is meant by a developing country? Why should a method only be valid in the context of a certain group of countries?

‘Methodology’ is the study of methods, rather than being a synonym for method.

In the section on ‘adaptations to the original model’ the term ‘area’ is not defined and this makes the description hard to follow.

More could be said about the distinction between health needs assessments and health care needs assessment. Is an epidemiological approach sufficient? (see Stevens and Raftery’s epidemiologically based reviews).

What next?: Reject because too small an advance to publish in any journal

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Statistical review: No
Declaration of competing interests:

I have no competing interests.