Reviewer's report

Title: Do medical outpatients want out of hours clinics?

Version: 2 Date: 17 February 2005

Reviewer: Ann-Louise Caress

Reviewer's report:

This is a succinct, but informative report of a modest, but well-focused study addressing a topic which is of relevance to clinicians, health service managers and policy makers. The background is brief, but includes some pertinent references. A couple of additional references in paragraph 3 to support the 2nd sentence would be welcome. The study is clearly located in the UK (and indeed London) context, but the findings are of relevance beyond this setting. The purpose of the study is clearly identified. The study design is appropriate. The authors do not explicitly state that a cross-sectional survey design was employed, but this is readily apparent. The methods are only briefly described, but are sufficient to permit replication (especially with the welcome inclusion of the instrument) and to adequately contextualise the study.

It might be helpful if the authors were to explain/justify their choice of options for item 3 and to indicate how/whether these were piloted, or otherwise discussed/refined prior to data collection. There is no sample size calculation presented, however this is acceptable as the data are only subjected to descriptive analysis. The sample is comparable with that acquired in other surveys of patients' perspective/patients' satisfaction. The results are presented clearly and appropriately. Although some sub-group analyses were undertaken, only descriptive statistics were employed. Might inferential tests have been considered here? The authors might wish to consider this, as it could strengthen the data. The discussion is well-balanced and appropriate. The limitations of the study are acknowledged. The need for further research and especially, consideration of the wider service implications is acknowledged. Appropriate work from other fields is identified and considered critically. The conclusions drawn are justified and logically arise from the data. References are appropriate. The inclusion of an appendix is appropriate, as this is a novel tool.

What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No