Reviewer's report

Title: The development and implementation of a regional network of physiotherapists for exercise therapy in patients with peripheral arterial disease

Version: 1 Date: 10 January 2005

Reviewer: Robert Patterson

Reviewer's report:

General
The submission by Willigendael et al represents an interesting descriptive narrative of the preliminary implementation of a regional exercise therapy program. There is no tested hypothesis or experimental method, and as such the paper should not be written in the format of a scientific article.

The problem is of significant public health interest (ie promoting conservative Rx of claudication to a large population) and, as the authors state, there are few (if any) national or regional programs to address the problem. Publication of this work, after major revision, would be useful to provide other health systems with the concept of a regional model that may prove effective.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
This report should not be formatted as a traditional scientific article. In the absence of a tested hypothesis, and with virtually no data, the standard "background, methods, results, discussion" format is cumbersome and inappropriate. The article should be rewritten as a preliminary report, a description of what has been done, and why, to establish a regional ET program through physiotherapists. At its conclusion, future hypotheses to be tested and measures to be collected should be documented - the basis for a future scientific article testing the effectiveness and results of this system. Otherwise, publication should not be sought until data has been collected and reviewed.

Specific comments:
The only true data presented is the # of practices invited to initially participate (59), agreeing to participate (45) and completing the final program (18), as well as the # of initial PTs attending(64) and the # completing the program (270). These #s are very similar to compliance #s for patients with claudication who are offered participation in a program. Is the problem of claudication not interesting? not viewed as important? not adequately reimbursed? - this should be discussed.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests