Reviewer's report

Title: Implementation of a Health Care Policy: An analysis of barriers and facilitators to practice change

Version: 1 Date: 3 June 2005

Reviewer: Ruairidh Milne

Reviewer's report:

General

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. This is an interesting paper on a topic of importance across the world
2. Background is unbalanced and too long. I would suggest (a) separating it into two parts: introduction (ie current 1st 4 paras); and the policy (ie the rest) and (b) shortening it by more than half (partly by removing the pre-1998 history) (c) sharpening/saying more about the background of barriers/facilitators and the grol and Grimshaw model (both of which are central to the paper)
3. Methods (1). I found the description of the Methods unclear. What is needed, I think, is (i) a statement that this is based on secondary analysis of the 2 TOMIS studies (ii) brief explanation of what the 2 TOMIS studies did (iii) mention of any special features of the 2 TOMIS studies that are relevant to this paper
4. Methods (2). Something needs to be said about how the findings of the focus groups were analysed
5. Methods (3). On page 15, the question is posed: Perhaps the more important issue is did the policy result in increased LOS overall, and particularly in a decrease in lengths of stay of less than 25 and 48 hours? Table 2 then presents results for this. It is crucial for readers to know whether these cut-offs were prespecified or whether they are data-dependent, but I could find no mention of this in the Methods. Something needs to be added
6. Discussion (1). If the authors are using the Grol and Grimshaw framework of organizational, professional and social contexts to help us understand barriers and facilitators, they need to be much more explicit about the framework in the Discussion. This is potentially a 3x2 table, but though I looked for signs of some such structure in the discussion, I could not find it. If it is there, it needs to be much more explicit and clear.
7. Tables (1). All the numbers need to be given so that readers can see the numerators and denominators for themselves
8. Tables (2). Give the chi-square results as well as the p-values
9. Tables (4). I found table 1 and its footnotes confusing they need to be made clearer. One possibility would be to show for each site the number, the number offered a 60 hour stay, the number who took part in the 4 week interview, the number who had accepted a 60 hour stay, etc
10. Tables (4). I couldn't see what statistical test had been used for table 2 please give full details of method and findings
11. Tables (5). Presumably the p value in table 3 is about the difference between the 5 sites. If so, the data need to be presented separately for the 5 sites

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

Abstract
12. no statement of objective of study
13. no mention that study based on secondary analysis of TOMIS
   Other
14. There is reference to the recruited and retained groups - these terms have not been defined but need to be
15. 1st sentence on p 18 needs redrafting: What seemed to be at issue was who and on what basis LOS was decided.
16. mirrored U.S. practices of a normative 48-hour stay (p19) needs a reference

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

17. National perspective. Writing about health care systems for an international readership is always tricky, since you can never be sure how much different readers will know about your own country's system. I would suggest (i) minimising the use of jargon (ii) defining jargon where it has to be used (eg provider, public health unit) (iii) then addressing international relevance in the Discussion
18. Discussion (2). In the penultimate para, the authors reasonably argue that some of the outside factors did not differ between their before and after measurements. But for the discussion to be complete, we need more consideration of those which might have differed and in particular changes in other programs or changes in expectations.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests