**Reviewer's report**

**Title:** Caution required when relying on a colleagues advice; a comparison between professional advice and evidence from the literature

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 14 March 2005

**Reviewer:** Roberto Oliveri

**Reviewer's report:**

**General**

This study adresses the relevant and important issue in the medical community of doctors relying on "expert" advice - unfortunately not unique for occupational physicians. The manuscript is well written with a clear tight writing.

The experimental setting is realistic and the investigators have pursued to address relevant and varied occupational health problems/cases, increasing the validity of the study.

Further, considerations on sample size and power of the study are provided (however, the $14 \times 3 \times 2 = 84$ cases cannot be considered to be completely independent from each other in a strictly statistical sense).

The study provides confidence intervals instead of p-values, thus providing more useful information about effect size.

The authors conclusions is in line with the results.

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

None

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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)

Methods-section:
- two full stops after "84 cases"

Results-section:
- Missing comma after "via e-mail (37.3%)"

Discussion-section:
- Third line "previeous" --> "previous"

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**Discretionary Revisions** (which the author can choose to ignore)

- I miss some minor additional background data on the experts in table 2, e.g. sex, years since
graduation, academic level (Phd's?) etc. Were there any differences in consulting EBM literature etc.?

- How was the selection of the 14 participants made? Were they chosen on a random basis? If not, the authors ought state why a more selective inclusion was chosen (colleagues of colleagues?) and discuss the impact on external validity. For example, one could suspect a higher academic level among the participating OPs if they were acquaintances of the investigators, which again could influence their selection and reliance of expert advice etc. (I know this is not the main hypothesis to test).

**What next?:** Accept after minor essential revisions

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests