Reviewer's report

Title: Discussion and Consensus regarding the GRADE proposal for grading Clinical Practice Guideline recommendations: Report on a qualitative study.

Version: Date: 27 June 2006

Reviewer: Martin Eccles

Reviewer’s report:

General
I approached this paper with considerable interest. Having reviewed it I am unsure whether or not there is a publishable paper in what has been submitted. This is in large part because throughout the paper the authors have had problems with written English. This is not to say that the overall quality of the English is poor – it isn’t. But the authors are writing at a sophisticated level and their choice of words does not seem quite right. Within the methods and results I can fairly confidently guess what they mean but once they get into the discussion and conclusions I find it much harder to understand what they mean. I think that dealing with this probably goes beyond just getting a copy editor to look at it. It feels more that the research team needs to engage closely with a native English language speaker to ensure that what they write is true to their data as well as reflecting the sophisticated concepts they are dealing with.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
The title suggest that the paper is about the GRADE system but it is not clear what the precise focus of the paper is – and the authors do not explicitly state what their research question is. This makes it difficult to hold a clear idea of the purpose of the paper. Throughout, the authors should be crisper and more focussed about what they are trying to present. For example, I would suggest sub-sectioning the methods with headings like: context; participants; data sources and collection; ancillary data sources, analysis

The paper would benefit from a more detailed description of the GRADE process. When the authors refer to various parts of the GRADE process it is only because I know the process that I can understand what is being discussed. A reader who was not familiar with the process would struggle badly.

The overall structure of the paper is not helpful. The conclusions are the longest section of the paper. There are some areas of the discussion that appear to be presenting results and some areas of the conclusions that are I would regard as discussion.

The relationship of Figure 1 to the paper is not clear. If it is some schematic representation of the results it should appear within the results section rather than in the conclusions.

Similarly, the relationship between Appendix 2 and the paper is not clear. I am uncertain whether this paper is reporting these results (it seems to make reference to a questionnaire in the results) or whether it is referring to them (in which case the table does not necessarily need to be reproduced). It sits oddly appearing for the first time in the discussion.

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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)

Refer to Spain instead of our country.

Abbreviation for Focus group (FG) is often written as FG.

I would suggest that the past tense is used throughout the results.

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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: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited
Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.