Reviewer's report

Title: Impact on and use of health services by international migrants: questionnaire survey of inner city London A&E attenders

Version: 1 Date: 29 September 2006

Reviewer: Gerard Bury

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)

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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)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

This is a useful and interesting insight into an interface issue involving various providers of ambulatory care.

Its value is limited by the response rate of <50%, by the potential impact of cultural or educational issues, by its limitation to ambulatory as opposed to emergent cases and by the catchment area served. The authors indicate their awareness of these limitations but say that the clinical experience of the departmental staff bears out the validity of the data - it may be appropriate in the discussion to take a more cautious approach and to indicate that these may not be generalisable results.

While the discussion moves to the 'appropriateness' of use of the ED by these patients, no data is provided on the clinical content or outcomes of their visits. The paper has value as a descriptor of service utilisation but would be difficult to justify as a study of the appropriateness of attendance, based on the data included. I would suggest that this issue therefore be a limited one for discussion.

The text suggest that many of the ANS group are in the UK for educational purposes but 88.6% are reported to have a paid job - is this correct? The finding that this group were much less likely to have a GP is interesting.

Finally, it might be useful to outline some directions for further research in the area.

What next?: Accept after discretionary 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