Reviewer’s report

Title: The implementation of quality management systems in hospitals: a comparison between three countries.

Version: 1 Date: 25 April 2005

Reviewer: Hub Wollersheim

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) What is the overlap/difference with the article in Health Policy 2001 in which Finland and the Netherlands have been compared?
2) Why are the countries not compared in a statistical manner?
3) The abstract says 101 hospitals (which I think is correct), on page 7 149 Dutch hospitals are mentioned.
4) There is a difference in the objectives between the abstract (progress in QM and its relation to stakeholders) and the article (progress in QM and governmental legislation or financial stimulation).
5) Some conclusions are insufficiently supported by data. I do not see from the data that specific obligations stimulate the implementation better. I do not see that financial stimulation is even more effective? For me the main conclusion is the lack of patient participation.
5) On page 6 it is stated that the managing director should answer the questions. How well is a managing director informed? Especially in large hospitals like University hospitals they may not be well informed and they may gave an optimistic opinion. Why was not a second questionnaire send to the quality manager?
6) How was the non response analysis exactly performed?
7) I find it a pity that no results regarding QI activities have been evaluated. The authors confound activities with results. Quality activities without results can be a waste of time and resources.

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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)
1) If you rely on intrinsic motivation (page 11) external pressure is contraindicated.
2) The reference number on page 12, line 8 is missing.
3) Page 13 ref Sluijs/ Outinen is incomplete.
4) Table 2 and 3 can be integrated.
5) Figure 1 and 2 can be left out.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
The word practice guideline can be misleading. I would skip the word practise.

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: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.