Reviewer’s report

Title: The professional collaboration is dependent of the quality of communication between hospital and general practitioners: a panel study of the content and quality of referral and discharge letters.

Version: 1 Date: 18 February 2007

Reviewer: Moyez Jiwa

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)

There are a number of issues that need to be addressed:

1. Your introduction does not give us any clear idea how healthcare is organised in your country. Therefore an international audience would not have a clear grasp of the setting for the study.
2. Your literature review is out of date. There are many more recent papers exploring the issues and these are have not been cited. I would also urge you to cite mainly Norwegian or North European studies if possible.
3. The data are relatively old (2002). Has anything changed in terms of health care in Norway since then?
4. Your references to the 'instrument' used by the 'expert' panel is to a statistics paper on visual analogue scale. This does not constitute a valid or reliable instrument from a previous study. It simply refers to VAS and the way it is presented is misleading.
5. In your methodology you make no reference to the referring doctor. This is a major weakness of your study. In my view it was critical to seek further information from the doctor about the circumstances that led to the hospital admission. Without that information, assuming that the referral letters were short and limited, your expert panel would be speculating. It may for example have been helpful to compare the views of the expert panel with the information received from the referring doctor or the patient themselves afterwards. To think about triangulation in other words.
6. You use the word 'consent' to mean 'reach consensus'. I have a very great deal of admiration for authors who submit papers in other than their first language. However the usual use of this term underlines the importance of seeking advice about your manuscript from a fluent English speaker.
7. What are polyclinics?
8. Reference 15 is not a research study as cited by you in the discussion.
9. Your conclusions cannot be justified from your data and your data are limited by your methodology. It may be difficult to remedy the situation now.

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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)

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What next?: Reject because scientifically unsound

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests