Reviewer's report

Title: Dental practice satisfaction with preferred provider organizations

Version: 1 Date: 18 May 2007

Reviewer: David Brennan

Reviewer's report:

General

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

The Background emphasises ‘dentists perceptions’ and ‘dentists views’, and the research questions (aims) that were stated were prefaced by the comment “Little is known about dentist’s assessment of particular features of PPO plans…” so “To address these questions, we analysed data…”. Yet in the Methods it was stated that 80% of respondents were office managers, hence the paper appears not to have addressed its stated aims (ie, dentist's assessments), and no rationale is given for why office managers were considered appropriate target respondents.

No data were presented describing the other ‘non-office manager’ respondents, or whether there were differences in outcomes between ‘office managers’ and ‘non-office managers’.

If responses vary between ‘office managers’ and ‘non-office managers’ then they should be either stratified in the analysis or the ‘non-office managers’ excluded.

Bivariate analysis and descriptive means of Satisfaction (both overall and components) by Plan should be added to aid the interpretation of the models.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

In the Methods the text “the distribution of practices among plans was virtually identical to what would be expected based on market share” is not a Method, and should be moved to Results or Discussion.

Cronbach’s alpha values are quoted at three points in the Methods, but they should be moved to the Results.

Under the heading ‘Missing values’ data are quoted (ie, “Between .3 and 2.5% of items (median of 1%)” and “(n=24, 6.5%)” and “(n=50). Overall, of the 4582 total surveys evaluating the 6 PPO plans, 4508 (98.3%) were included in the analysis”) which should be in the Results not Methods.

In the Results, correlations of between .47 and .66 were quoted as “strong” associations when they should be referred to as “moderate” (eg, see Martin P, Bateson P (1986) Measuring behaviour. An introductory guide. Cambridge: CUP).

The abbreviation “DMOs/DHMOs” in Table 1 was not defined.

The r-squared value in model 1 of Table 2 is low and warrants some comment.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Abstract: the phrase “Despite their increasing popularity” could be changed from “popularity” to something more precise such as “market share”.

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, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests