Reviewer's report

Title: Hospital outpatient perceptions of the physical environment of waiting areas: the role of patient characteristics on atmospherics in one academic medical center

Version: 2 Date: 20 July 2007

Reviewer: Andrew M Garratt

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 The Abstract, aims of the study presented at the end of the Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion should all reflect the inclusion of the summated rating scale. This is an important addition to the paper which supersedes the use of single items. At present it is largely consigned to the Methods section where it has simply been appended to the paper without any consideration of its possible usefulness as a means of further improving the paper. In particular it is by far the most useful dependent variable in the regression analysis, the distributions of the single items being skewed five-point data. The reliability of single items is also likely to be low. Hence this approach makes more sense from both psychometric and statistical perspectives. I suggest removing the regression analyses relating to the single items and having two tables for the overall 15-point scale, one for the results of the univariate analyses (with appropriate statistical tests) and the other for the regression analysis. This will greatly improve the paper.

2 Some description of the scale scores for the 15-item summated rating scale should be give in the Results section including mean (sd) and some commentary on the distribution shape including evidence for any floor or ceiling effects.

3 The scale should also be given a name that can be used throughout the paper.

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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 Item scaling should be presented before the factor analysis within the Methods.

2 There should be subheadings for Data Collection and Questionnaire Development and Testing within the Results that use the same wording as the Methods. This makes the paper easier to follow. The results of factor analysis and internal consistency should be described under the second subheading
above of the Results.

3 The last sentence in the Conclusion uses the word “affected”. This should be changed to “were associated with” as we cannot be sure that there is a relationship for all of these variables. Moreover, there is little theoretical work to build upon.

4 Following my previous comments there are still a large number of problems with the English including terminology. There are examples on possibly every page. For example, within the Abstract Methods (sentence 2) “within” should replace the first “of”. On page five (second paragraph, first sentence) the last few words should be changed to “accreditation relating to the design of outpatient…”. The first “in” should be dropped from the next sentence and “with” should be inserted immediately following the close of the brackets. I have made numerous corrections on a hard copy of the paper which I am willing to send to the authors.

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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:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**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.