Reviewer's report

Title: The costs and potential savings of a novel telepaediatric service in Queensland

Version: 1 Date: 14 December 2006

Reviewer: Trine Strand Bergmo

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 clearly written paper with clear objectives and a good description of the topic of assessment. The authors have used a cost-minimisation methodology to calculate the net savings of a telepaediatric service in Queensland. The applied method of analysing the costs seems valid and the results reasonable. The study describes the costs of providing telemedicine services to a group of patients and compare this cost with the costs that might have been incurred have the service been provided in a traditional manner i.e. sending the patients to the main tertiary hospital. This is always a difficult business, but the authors have accounted for it in the discussion. They have also carried out a threshold analysis (Figure 2) showing that the break even for this service to become cost effective is well below the actual number of consultations.

Minor comments
The authors state on page 3, paragraph 3 that the majority (85%) of all responses facilitated by the telepaediatric service involve a videoconference. I assume that information on how the remaining responses were handled is of interest to the reader as well.

Videoconferencing usually requires two medical doctors present to conduct one patient consultation. I assume that the regional presenter in Table 1 is a medical doctor. This might not be efficient use of scarce resources in areas with a shortage of medical doctors even if the savings are substantial. The authors could address this issue in the discussion.

What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

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