Author's response to reviews

Title: Motives and preferences of general practitioners for new collaboration models with medical specialists: a qualitative study.

Authors:

Annette J Berendsen (a.j.berendsen@med.umcg.nl)
Wim HGM Benneker (wbensan@hetnet.nl)
Betty Meyboom-de Jong (b.meyboom@med.umcg.nl)
Niek S Klazinga (n.s.klazinga@amc.uva.nl)
Jan Schuling (j.schuling@med.umcg.nl)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor,

Thank you for your letter. In this cover letter I will give you a point-by-point response to the comments of the reviewers. We would like to thank the reviewers for their positive reaction and the time they spent for the thorough comments. We worked seriously on the manuscript

Thomas Rosemann
General
1) By the comment we realized that our second research question was not translated optimally. We changed the used verb from prefer to suggest. The verb prefer gives the impression the interviewees could chose. This wasn’t so. We added a table (table 2) in which the models suggested by the GPs are presented.

2) During the interviews we had an open approach which was absolutely not too much focussed. There was no restriction of topics. As we state in the article: The topics for discussion were: positive and negative experiences with medical specialists, whether or not GPs were willing to participate in the initiation of new models of collaboration, what form such collaboration should take, and to which patient groups it would apply. The subjects were asked to use concrete examples to illustrate their opinions. The questions did not have to follow a set order to allow the subjects to freely associate among different topical areas. The duration of the interviews differed from 1 to 2 ½ hours. (see point 5)

Abstract
3) In the conclusion section of the abstract I deleted the sentence – these motives will probably not last – as this is incomprehensible without its context.

Background
4) We agree that it would be interesting to learn about current collaboration models in the Netherlands. Alas, this research doesn’t concern this topic. (see point 1)

Methods
5) Data gathering section. We used a list of topics as a checklist. Apart from the above mentioned questions (see point 2) we used several sub topics. As stated before the interviewees were allowed to associate freely. So, some interviews were in depth.

6) Analyses section. We changed this sentence in: The transcripts were read by a senior researcher to control for short, open and neutral questions.

7) As the reviewer suggested, we added two tables.

Results
8) The interviews were performed over such a long period (May 2003-March 2005) because we started with partially the same research team a study among medical specialists (see 16) in April 2004 and, among patients in November 2004. This caused a delay (on purpose) of the progress of the interviews and the analysis. Besides, we decided to extend the interviews of GPs to the whole Netherlands.

9) Saturation occurred after the 13th interview possibly due to a good sampling strategy and the extensive interview methods used (often in depth).

10) Grol and Grimshaw described GPs’ provisos and resistances to implement evidence based medicine. Our study shows GPs consider evidence based medicine an important source of knowledge. In our opinion this latter finding is not surprising as both findings are true.
Discussion

11) The reviewer stated that there are no results reflecting the statement: GPs would like to influence medical specialists to the competencies etc. The reviewer didn’t cite the text correctly. The word influence isn’t used in the manuscript: GPs would like to introduce medical specialist…etc. In the results section this wish to introduce medical specialists can be found in the paragraph: Understanding each other’s methods of working and professional competencies.

12) The various specialties are mentioned in the results section in the paragraphs of the suggested new models of collaboration. I changed the summary in the discussion and made it congruent with the table (table 2).

13) We deleted the sentence about the senior researcher as we changed that sentence in the method section (see point 6).

14) Conclusions: As qualitative research is inductive we hypothesized. This is not possible in two or three sentences. The sentence mentioned by the reviewer was changed in: might be threatened as to make clear it is a hypothesis. Quantitative research is necessary to investigate the general applicability of the results.

15) We changed the last sentence and do hope it is understandable now.

Geoffrey Mitchell

16) Indeed, the specialist point of view was not considered in this study. As stated before (point 8) we conducted interviews with specialists too about their preferences for collaborating with GPs. On short notice we will submit these findings. We chose to submit a separate paper because the focus of the specialists differ as did the research group.

Caro van Uden

17) See point 8 and 16. In the conclusions we mentioned that the preferences of the specialists must be taken in account. So we do emphasize that more information is needed. A quantitative follow up study will take place.

18) Health policymakers could consider the motives, preferences, and, impediments before starting a new collaboration model. As qualitative research is inductive and unable to generalize further practical directions have to be obtained by quantitative research.

I do hope that the revisions in the manuscript and this cover letter are satisfactory.
Yours sincerely

Annette Berendsen