Reviewer's report

Title: Improving organisational systems for diabetes care in Australian Indigenous communities

Version: 1 Date: 8 October 2006

Reviewer: Mark F Harris

Reviewer's report:

General
This paper is an important study of the impact of a quality improvement process for diabetes in 12 indigenous health centres in the North Territory. This is an area which is difficult to conduct research and the authors are to be commended for collecting data on both process of care and intermediate outcomes in this setting. The validation of audit data is particularly important.

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

Of concern in the methods is the definition of a blood pressure treatment goal of >140/90. This is inconsistent with NHMRC guidelines which recommend a treatment goal of <130/85 in people with diabetes and <125/75 in people with renal disease. At the very least this should be commented on in the methods and discussion.

The authors attempted to control for some of the possible confounding that may have occurred in particular clustering at Centre level and repeated measures from individuals. However the paper does not describe if the intermediate outcome data was adjusted for age or duration of diabetes. If this was done it should be described.

The discussion and conclusion is are well written. There should be the obvious caveat to the conclusion that improvements occurred following the QI intervention that there were no control or comparison data and thus it is possible that at least some of the improvements may have been due to secular trends.

I am aware that this work has been submitted for a PhD by the second author Damin Si under Professor Bailie’s supervision. This appears to be inconsistent with the Authors’ contributions section which states that Professor Bailie “played lead role in conceptualization, design, management of fieldwork and data analysis, and drafting of this manuscript”. This is a very important issue which should be clarified before publication.

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

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 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.