Reviewer's report

Title: Evaluating the organisational climate in Italian public healthcare institutions by means of a questionnaire

Version: Date: 22 February 2007

Reviewer: Robyn Gershon

Reviewer's report:

General

This is a very interesting and general well written and thoughtful paper on a topic for which data are exceptionally sparse. The authors did a commendable effort to recruit a substantial number of varying types of hospitals to participate in this study on the potentially sensitive, even explosive topic of organizational climate. The ICONAS project must be extremely well respected to have garnered this level of support.

What the authors have accomplished is to develop and administer a 50 item anonymous questionnaire to a large sample of employees across ten Italian healthcare organizations. The authors argue that given the tremendous organizational change in the past decade or so and faced with impending nursing shortages, the timing for a survey on organizational climate was right. Apparently this was true as they had institutional support from ten facilities and an impressive 65% response rate among employees.

The instrument was subjected to extensive psychometric analysis, some of which was fairly sophisticated. They found that the variance explained by the 7 principal components with initial eigen values >1 was 62.3% and that one component explained 40% of the variance. This in itself was interpreted as a measure of organizational climate. Factor analysis confirmed the content validity of the items. Internal consistency was high.

The authors make several pertinent comments of the difficulties that both researchers and administration face when measuring organizational climate, including the multiplicity of instruments all purporting to measure this construct. This well-designed study will surely be an important milestone in creating a uniform approach to measurement. Other studies confirming this need to be replicated in other developed countries. If it turns out to be equally efficacious, we will have an opportunity to measure organizational climate transnationally.

Some minor revisions are noted below, the most important of these is to have the paper carefully edited by an English speaking editor in order to assure conformance with the English language and typical usage; e.g., table 1 ("% adhesion") should be (% response). These minor problems notwithstanding, this was a very enjoyable and exciting article to read.

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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)

Text should be reviewed by an English speaking editor to ensure conformance with appropriate and standard English. Changes to indicate what is needed are made directly to the text. Figures 4 and 5 can be easily discussed in text. Tables 2 and 3 can be deleted after similarly mentioning the text without greatly impacting the paper and overall message.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

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What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

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