Reviewer's report

Title: Does Delayed Measurement Effect Patient Reports of Provider Performance? Implications for Performance Measurement of Medical Assistance with Tobacco Cessation: A Dental PBRN study

Version: 1 Date: 30 November 2007

Reviewer: Catherine Dube

Reviewer's report:

Does Delayed Measurement Effect Patient Reports of Provider Performance? Implications for Performance Measurement of Medical Assistance with Tobacco Cessation: A Dental PBRN Study

Houston TK, et al

The question posed by the authors is very interesting and well defined, and the implications of this study are important for researchers who use retrospective accounts of patient experiences in office visits with health care providers. Methods are generally well thought-out and well described with exceptions noted below. Data collection procedures are very well described and the data appear sound and well controlled. The results for the "advise" and "ask" exit card vs. phone follow-up surveys are well organized and clear. Comments on other results are noted below. The title and abstract accurately convey the nature of the study.

- Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The description of how the practices were chosen for this study is a little confusing. Apparently these were the randomized control practices from a different study. Randomization techniques and the larger study should be more clearly described.

2. It is not clear why these investigators decided to compare responses by practice, or why changes in quartile rank of practices would be enlightening or necessary.

3. Conclusions should be somewhat more tempered. The investigators found that delayed surveys do not agree with exit surveys in this study with this population. It is also difficult to conclude that immediate assessment is superior as investigators cannot know what actually happened in the clinical encounter. It does make sense that immediate recall would probably be more accurate, but this study cannot make that conclusion given the data presented. It can, however, rightly point out that immediate and delayed assessment is in fact different, and postulate "Why?"
- Minor Essential Revisions

None.

- Discretionary Revisions

1. For the most part the discussion and conclusions are well balanced and supported by the data, and some very good points are made. However, additional consideration of the accuracy of the exit cards is warranted (e.g., further study to see if exit cards accurately reflect what happened in the encounter, or is that report also influenced by the Hawthorne effect?)

2. The writing is acceptable with some exceptions. On page 10, second paragraph is awkward. However this is about the analysis by practice, so perhaps it should be cut. In the Discussion section, 2nd paragraph, 4th sentence is awkward, and top of page 12, "documentation" and "documented" would rephrase.

What next:

- Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Quality of Written English -- Acceptable

Statistical Review

- No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

I declare that I have no competing interests