Reviewer's report

Title: A Danish population-based cohort study of newly diagnosed asthmatic children's care pathway - adherence to guidelines

Version: 1 Date: 11 March 2008

Reviewer: Barbara Yawn

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting report of the use of lung function testing in children in a Danish cohort. However, the interpretation of the guidelines that a lung function assessment is required every 6 months I believe is incorrect. There is no data to show that such measurements are of any value unless the child has difficult to control asthma or is having an exacerbation at the time of the visit which is not the type of visit recommended in the guidelines. Therefore, I would expect the rate of lung function to be higher among visits to specialists since those children are more likely to have difficult to control asthma or they would not be visiting specialists. The idea that specialists think that 5 year olds can do lung function does not make it so and so I would have limited the analysis to those 8 and older as a secondary analysis to see if age is playing a role or if primary care physicians just have read the evidence suggesting that repeated lung function testing is of little or no value in people with controlled asthma.

Major: A more complete discussion of the lack of evidence for repeat lung function testing despite what the authors suggest the guidelines require would be valuable. It does not make sense to imply poor quality care for not doing something that is not of value and uses resources that may be more appropriately spent elsewhere.

It would be helpful to identify exactly where in the guidelines the statement about lung function every 6 months is recommended.

The use of drug refills to measure severity is always a problem. This limitation should be discussed. It may be helpful for the most severe but in lesser severe cases, adherence becomes a major issue. This should be discussed.

A more complete discussion of the major limitation of not being able to use any diagnostic codes and therefore missing perhaps most of the asthma visits should be included.

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

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