Reviewer’s report

Title: Evaluation of the impact of implementing nursing guidelines on delivery of care in hospitals and community settings

Version: 1 Date: 10 June 2007

Reviewer: Anne Sales

Reviewer’s report:

General
This is a well written paper on a topic that has received very little study to date. Nurses comprise the largest professional group in health care, and the degree to which they adopt and act on guideline-recommended care is important.

The study they report is interesting and reasonably well-designed. My main concern is that the breadth of the initial study--implementation of 6 quite disparate guidelines in at least 3 different health care sectors--was probably overly ambitious. As a result, the findings are difficult to interpret, and not clear what action is possible.

Specific comments below.

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

My main concern is that the study covers such breadth that it is difficult to derive straightforward "take home" messages from the findings. It would be more useful to get a higher level of detail on one or two guidelines than this quite general paper that attempts to cover a very wide range of guidelines in a wide range of sectors. As a result, the paper reads as though it is "thin", although broad. A major reason for this thinness, in my opinion, is that the number of recommendations being described is overwhelming. In a real life situation, people attempting to implement a guideline would have to prioritize. Given that this is not the approach taken in this evaluation of a very broad, wide-ranging attempt at guideline implementation, my main recommendation is that the authors attempt to focus in on the most important recommendations for each of the six guidelines, and describe them in more detail to permit the reader to get a sense of deeper and more important issues. The lack of detail in this version is frustrating.

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

The paper is generally well written. However, the authors use a confusing shorthand in several places in the text, referring to pre- and post- without the appropriate subject. As a result, in some places, they describe "pre-data collection" or "post-data collection". In all instances, what they mean is "pre-intervention" or "post-intervention". This needs to be written out appropriately rather than using the common "pre and post" without a subject or with an incorrect subject.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

My major revision suggestion is simply to do some level of prioritization among the recommendations in the guidelines included in the study. I think this is important to give this paper substance. However, more importantly--and the authors may be planning this already--the authors should consider a series of papers, which would probably be more informative to the nursing and implementation science research communities, giving much more detail about each of the six guidelines. What characteristics of the guidelines might have had an impact? What factors related to each sector included in the study might have had an impact? How did nurse participants prioritize or rate the importance of specific recommendations from the guidelines? It is a little difficult to figure out how much data were collected, although it appears to be considerable. I encourage the authors to continue to develop papers based on their data.

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, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.