Reviewer's report

Title: Bridging the Care Continuum: Patient Information Needs for Specialist Referrals

Version: 1 Date: 7 May 2009

Reviewer: Leon Piterman

Reviewer's report:

This is an important paper that provides useful insights into the perspective of referred patients receiving care from specialists. Whilst the findings are not surprising they are informative and provide an evidence base for what has been previously described in other qualitative studies. The construction and the validation of the questionnaire was well executed and the statistical analysis is rigorous even though the sample is relatively small for a study of this nature and may have questionable representativeness based on the demographic data provided (55% College Education yet total family income < 40,000 in 66% despite 94% having insurance....does suggest some incongruities). It may be difficult to generalise some of the findings to other health care systems where specialists only see referred patients (e.g., UK, Australia) The authors should address this and the points listed below when they revise the paper.

1. What were the chronic conditions diagnosed in the respondents? ie how was the sample defined?
2. How is trust in the physician measured? Is it just a statement by the patient?
3. The authors comment on 30% of patients having tests repeated. Some statement of cost implications should be made?
4. What was the common method of Primary Care -Specialist provider communication? Was electronic communication used and if so what did patients know/think about this?

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