Reviewer's report

Title: Introducing the National COPD Resources and Outcomes Project: why audit alone is an insufficient driver of change

Version: 1 Date: 2 February 2009

Reviewer: Douglas Mapel

Reviewer's report:

This is a descriptive report of the results of a national survey on the delivery of COPD care in the United Kingdom.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The title is confusing and even misleading to some degree. The first half is fine – this is a report on a national project to improve COPD care, and the results of the initial survey. The second half is speculative and contradicted by some of the findings. This is not really a project about ‘why’, meaning that it is not a rigorously designed project meant to identify why things change or don’t change. There was no central hypothesis or research question. It is just a report. The title is contradicted by the data because from 2003 to 2007, there really was quite a bit of change towards improvement (see Table 2). In fact, the only things that didn’t significantly improve suffered from a ‘ceiling effect’, because performance was already good in those categories. One hypothesis that could be reasonably deduced from the comparison of these two surveys is that the surveys themselves are good drivers of change. Nevertheless, the project wasn’t really designed to answer questions about why things changed, it only is a description that they did. Speculation about whether surveys are adequate drivers of change could be kept in the discussion section but must be taken out of the title.

2. For all tables, the ‘N’ is not clearly explained. For example, in Table 2, some of the comparisons are to 87 and others to 86. It would be helpful if these discrepancies were explained in legends for the tables.

3. Each section of the abstract could be substantially improved.

4. The Discussion is not very well organized. It needs to start with a concise summary of the major findings. There also needs to be a clearly defined section that reviews the limitations of this project. The discussion section needs to be completely revised to do what the title advertises – it needs to be a report (who, what, when, why, and how) on the National COPD Resources and Outcomes Project. There is a growing body of literature on COPD chronic disease and acute hospital management that supports most of the elements examined in the survey, but is not cited.

The authors need to keep in mind that this paper needs to provide details about the rationale and methods for the Project and will serve as the reference for reports about the results.
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I do not have any competing interests