Author's response to reviews

Title: Quality Management: Reduction of Waiting Time and Efficiency Enhancement in an ENT-University Outpatients' Department

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Professor Graham,

First of all we would like to thank you again for the once more thorough review of our manuscript. Following the helpful comments of the reviewers we have reworked the plan of our text. In some passages it is structured more strictly and we aimed at a linear organization. The single parts, especially the commented passages “Methods”, “Results” and “Conclusion” were revised critically and modified were necessary.

Reviewer's report 1; Reviewer: Gwenaelle Vidal-Trecan

The manuscript is clearer than previously. However, I do not think that my comments were satisfactorily addressed. The manuscript is written as a quality article and not as a research article.

Usually a research paper states the research question at the end of the introduction section and does not state before describing methods and results that they will helpful for others: “The positive outcome of our efforts allows taking these practical suggestions as blueprint for similar projects.”;

Modifications: The „Background“ passage has been shortened. At the end of the introduction we have specified facts and reasons which lead to this project, as well as the motivation for this study. As the reviewer suggested comments and assessments have been removed in this section.

For me it is still not clear why part of the results (i.e., the first part of analysis) of the complete analysis are described in the method section. The method section should indicate only the methods (i.e., design of the study, setting and population involved, intervention, data collection, analysis).

Modifications: This section has been reworked thoroughly with extensive modifications. First, all results have been removed here. The different sub-aspects have been assigned clearly to the four phases („actual state analysis”, “analysis of causes”, “correcting measures”, “examination of effectiveness”) of our work. References to the tables have been removed in this part; they only appear in the “Results” section now.

The result section should describe the results of the first analysis and the /
Modifications: The respective results are clearly assigned to the methodical aspects. So, some passages that in the previous version unfortunately appeared under “Methods” are now correctly positioned in the “Results” section.

The discussion section is now too long and repeat without need the background.

Modifications: This section has been shortened. In this version we left only some introductory sentences regarding the background.
In the first part of this section, the main results should be summarized and the originality of the study overlined. Then the main results should discussed and confronted to other publications. Some limits of the study should be discussed and then the conclusion could then open perspectives on utilisation by others.

Modifications: The discussion has been restructured. It starts with a brief summary of the results and points out the specific features of this project. Then these results are discussed and compared with the literature. Some additional quotations and references have been included. One paragraph discussing the limits of this study has been added. Die “Conclusion” part now is a little bit more elaborate to offer the reader some perspectives for practical application.

Reviewer's report 2; Reviewer: Margus Lember

The revised manuscript has improved compared with the initial version. The main points of my previous report have been addressed. The aim of the paper is much more clear now.

However, the changes in the main text are not covered in the abstract.

Modifications: In this version the abstract has been reworked according to the modifications of the main text blocks.

The Methods section has improved, but is still below the standards of a good quality research paper. The methods of the study are mixed with the methods of improvements in the practice/interventions. The general design of the study is poorly described.

Modifications: As mentioned above, the „Methods“ section has been reworked thoroughly and enlarged in many parts. The study design has been worked out more clearly. All text passages not belonging to the methods have been removed.

The tables are not helpful, not all tables are referred in the text.

Modifications: Now, there are references to all tables in the text. Tab. 1 and tab. 2 changed positions according to their reference in the text. We think that these tables are helpful in addition to the text. We feel that the now tab. 1 is a good supplementation of the text. Tab. 2 allows a quick summarizing overview of the single phases of this study and the respective actions.

Summarizing the manuscript has been re-worked. We, therefore, are confident that this new manuscript will come up to the requirements of the reviewers; we are looking forward hopefully to your acceptance for publication in BMC Health Services Research.

With our best regards

Matthias Helbig