Reviewer’s report

Title: Fostering Participation of General Practitioners in Integrated Health Services Networks: Incentives, Barriers, and Guidelines

Version: 1 Date: 12 August 2008

Reviewer: Michel Wensing

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This is study of physicians' views on integrated care for frail elderly patients in Montreal, Canada, based on interviews with 22 doctors. I think that question is relevant and the study is reasonably rigorous.

Major compulsory revisions

1. More detail on the integrated health service network would be required. The definition provided on page 2 could apply to different levels, such as single practice, a group of practices etc. up to a region or country. From the methods section I got the impression that it was mainly involvement of a case manager. So what is integrated health service network, particularly from the perspective of patient and a doctor (rather than a policy perspective)?

2. A related comment is that I would like to know how 'frailty' was exactly defined, because it may influence the effectiveness of the programme (a factor that is potentially related to the motivation of doctors to participate).

3. It is important to be more explicit about why the knowledge sought by this study is required. I assume that it will be used to improve integrated care, but this is neither well introduced in the introduction nor elaborated on in the discussion section.

4. This is a qualitative study, so I was suprised that a random sample of doctors was included. However, reading the methods carefully showed that in fact a purposeful sample was included: active and non active physicians. It would be more consistent with qualitative methods to describe the sampling procedure in this way.

5. The study limitations should list the fact that perceptions were sought. Perceived barriers and incentives are not necessarily actual barriers and incentives.

6. The data-analysis section in the methods is too short. I would like to read more detail on the analysis strategy. For instance, the identification of profiles was not mentioned.

Minor essential revisions
7. It is stated that participation of GPs in integrated care is crucial for its effectiveness (page 2). I agree, but this could be debated. Can this statement be supported by research evidence?

8. The study took place at two sites (page 3). Please explain what a site is.

9. Please specify when the study took place, in particular were the doctors recruited during or after the integrated care period?

10. It is said the questionnaire was based on literature. Please provide one or more references.

11. It is claimed that this was the first study of participation of GPs in integrated care for frail elderly patients. I do not believe this is entirely true, although I am not expert in this field. My colleague Monique van Eijcken has done similar research in my country, focusing on different types of nurses as case manager for frail elderly patients in general practice. I would expect that there is more related research.

12 The discussion seems to over emphasize that a significant number of patients per physician are needed for active participation. Does this follow from the study? Is a qualitative study the best methodology to show such impact? - I would say not.

**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’