Reviewer's report

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

Version: 2 Date: 7 November 2008

Reviewer: Wolfgang Himmel

Reviewer's report:

First of all, I would like to say that the authors replied to absolutely all concerns voiced by The Editor and the two reviewers. As far as I feel that these concerns are answered in a satisfying way, I will not further comment on them.

However, there are still some problems with this manuscript. I think the reason is that the authors extensively commented on all our concerns, but in several instances, they did not change the manuscript itself. It is much more important to follow through and make the changes to improve the manuscript than to respond to the reviewers with a detailed explanatory document. In the following, I will refer to 6 major problems that still exist and hope that the authors will find a way to change the manuscript accordingly:

1. In your comments to the reviewers, you gave a lengthy explanation about why you needed nearly 7 years to finish this paper about a study, which ended in 2001. You mention a possible memory bias in the Discussion section (p. 19), but I still miss an explanation about the publication delay in the paper. The Method section seems to be an appropriate place for this explanation.

2. The Editor suggested that you explicitly mention IN THE MANUSCRIPT the approval of the ethics committee as well as the informed consent given by the participants. I didn’t see either of these statements in the new version (or did I overlook them?).

3. Thank you that you described the two research sites in the Appendix. It would be very helpful if you try to characterize the difference between these two sites in one sentence in the Methods section (p. 6). I think it’s a bit difficult for those unfamiliar with the situation in Montreal to understand the differences apart from the fact that one side is a French-speaking neighborhood, the other one an English-speaking population. Both quarters seem to be rather low on the economic scale. It would be helpful if you would shortly characterize any important differences in the Methods section.

4. I think it is still difficult for readers to immediately understand that you do not study the difference between participation and non-participation but the difference between active and non-active participation. I would suggest that you either talk about “active participation” if you focus or stress this aspect (ex. 3rd para on page 3: “The active participation of general practitioners…” instead of “the participation of …”). The same expression may be helpful in the last para of the Introduction and the first para of the Methods section. Alternatively, you may
talk about “degree of involvement” or something like this. There are several more places in the manuscript, including the Abstract where you should use a more precise term that helps the reader to understand the main point of the article.

5. I have some problems accepting that it is not possible to give some valid data about the success of SIPA, including a comparison between the health status of those frail elderly that were cared for by active vs. non-active GPs. But even if I accept your explanation, you should mention this point as one of the major obstacles in your study. In the new version, however, you maintain that active participation by GPs is “critical to the success” of the project (p. 19) -- and exactly this data is missing!

6. I realize that you changed the Discussion according to some of our suggestions -- thank you! However, I was disappointed that this did not happen also in the conclusion of the Abstract. It is still the same as the previous version. I would prefer if you would make an effort to be more concise with regards to the different factors that you made responsible for the degree of involvement/participation. It should be possible to re-write the Conclusion according to page 17-18 in the Discussion.

**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 declare that I have no competing interests.