Author's response to reviews

Title: What is a clinical pathway? Development of a definition to inform the debate.

Authors:

Leigh D Kinsman (leigh.kinsman@med.monash.edu.au)
Thomas Rotter (Thomas.Rotter@health-con.de)
Erica James (Erica.James@newcastle.edu.au)
Pamela Snow (pamela.snow@med.monash.edu.au)
Jon Willis (jon.willis@latrobe.edu.au)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
26 February 2010

Dear Editor,
BMC Health Services Research,

Subject: Response to Reviewers’ reports for MS: 1752286623308359
“What is a clinical pathway? Development of a definition to inform the debate.”

Thank you for the reviewers’ reports regarding the above-named article. Our responses to their recommendations are as follows:

**Reviewer: Marilyn Bookbinder**

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<tr>
<th>Recommendation / comment</th>
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<td>“My only comment is whether the authors think it would be helpful to share the criterion that were least present in the review.”</td>
<td>The main aim of this paper was to describe the development of the criteria for a clinical pathway definition. Presentation of the criteria that were least present is more appropriate for the publication of results from our review, not this paper.</td>
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**Reviewer: Ulrich Ronellenfitsch**

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<td>“The fact that five criteria evolved and were tested should not be mentioned in the background but the results section.”</td>
<td>Agree – sentence deleted from background.</td>
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<td>“In the background section, the so far existing definitions of Clinical Pathways (e.g. from the EPA or the Muenster DRG research group) should briefly be presented alongside their shortcomings.”</td>
<td>Disagree. The EPA definition is partly derived from the papers cited in our article. To present the EPA definition in the background would be “putting the cart before the horse” i.e. before the definition was to evolve through the methodological process. We chose to derive our criteria from the primary sources. The Muenster DRG research group definition is not available in English. We doubt that the translation of the definition will be a worthwhile contribution.</td>
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<td>“I wonder if criteria 3 and 4 of the definition could overlap.”</td>
<td>Disagree. Our experience of conducting the review indicated that these criteria were distinctly different. Also, combining the criteria at this point would be altering our results.</td>
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<td>“The numbering of the stages in the methods section is erroneous.”</td>
<td>Agree– numbering corrected.</td>
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<td>“The term ‘weighting’ in the results section (bottom of p.6) is misleading.”</td>
<td>Agree. We have replaced the word “weighting” with “amended schedule of criteria”.</td>
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“To the last sentence in the discussion (‘...apply relevant evidence.’) I suggest adding ‘...regarding the use of clinical pathways’.

Agree – sentence altered accordingly.

List of abbreviations
No abbreviations were used in this article and, therefore, no list has been provided in the manuscript.

The content of this manuscript has not been published or submitted elsewhere.

EndNote X2 has been used as the referencing software in the preparation of this article.

Monash University is a BioMed Central member.

Sincerely,

Leigh Kinsman
Senior Research Fellow
Monash University