Reviewer’s report

Title: Time-to-diagnosis and symptoms of myeloma, lymphomas and leukaemias: a report from the Haematological Malignancy Research Network

Version: 2 Date: 19 August 2013

Reviewer: Fiona Walter

Reviewer’s report:

Howell et al’s report from the HMRN about time-to-diagnosis and symptoms of myeloma, lymphomas and leukaemias is an important and very well written paper. It reports new findings from the largest cohort of haematological cancers, and gives new insights on possible strategies to guide both new policy approaches and computerised decision support for primary care.

The methods used for the survey are appropriate and well described, and the strengths and limitations of this approach well presented in the discussion. The discussion and conclusions are well balanced and adequately supported by the data.

A few minor essential revisions are suggested:

(1) Abstract: the denominator of the survey is unclear, although it is much clearer in the main text. It would be helpful if it is made clearer that the ‘population 3.6 million’ refers to the area that the network covers; that a total 8858 patients were contacted, 5038 agreed to participate, and 3329 completed the survey.

(2) Results: p6: ‘we were unable to match…. And this was most common in myeloproliferative neoplasms.’ Again, this sentence should be clarified to explain the 10% unmatched symptoms.

(3) Figure 2: the Total line does not appear to match the lines below in relation to the ‘Others’ category. If this is correct, suggest adding some text to the figure to clarify this point. Also, it may be clearer if total numbers for each diagnostic group are added to the column on the left.

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest 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