**Reviewer’s report**

**Title:** General practitioners referring patients to specialists in tertiary healthcare: a qualitative study

**Version:** 0  **Date:** 07 Jan 2019

**Reviewer:** Clare Liddy

**Reviewer's report:**

Overall, I enjoyed reading this interesting and relevant paper about GPs referrals to specialists. I agree with the authors that little is known about the reasons for variability in referrals and the perspectives of the GPs themselves.

This qualitative study reports on focus groups from a single centre in Switzerland. the background gives some overview of the health system however I found the second paragraph about the access to specialists and the role of the GP a bit confusing- seems to say that most patients directly access specialists and not through the GP so it was a bit hard to understand scope of the problem- would suggest a bit of revision here.

Methods are well described with a survey development and copy of the survey as well as the creation of the FG Guide-well described methods especially for the qualitative section which are reported with rich quotes.

It is not clear to me where the results of the survey are- this quantitative data would be helpful to see in the context of the paper- I was not sure if they were reporting this elsewhere however I think it would be relevant to include here as it will help give greater context/understanding of the patterns- for example in the discussion section it is mentioned that the rate if referral in this centre is high but I do not have good sense of what this means.

I liked the discussion which highlighted the relevance of the findings and discussing the implications for practice.
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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