Reviewer’s report

Title: SPECIALIST LINK AND PRIMARY CARE NETWORK CLINICAL PATHWAYS- A NEW APPROACH OF PATIENT REFERRAL: A CROSS-SECTIONAL SURVEY OF AWARENESS, UTILIZATION AND USABILITY AMONG FAMILY PHYSICIANS IN CALGARY

Version: 0 Date: 02 Apr 2019

Reviewer: Erin Keely

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this paper which is a survey of PCP's with access to a non-urgent multispecialty telephone line. Unfortunately the response rate of 39% must be taken into account. It is possible that only providers with knowledge of the line answered the survey. You could do a sensitivity analysis to see what this would do to your numbers. The conclusion that most of the family physicians are aware of specialist link cannot be stated - most of the respondents were aware, but you do not know about the non-responders. There should be a comparison of responders to the general population of family physicians to see how similar in characteristics they are.

The paper needs substantial rewriting. Highlighting the benefits of specialist link over eConsult is misleading. The interpretation of the papers on eConsult are not accurate. There have not been concerns about security or privacy of the established services in Canada (all services need to ensure they meet the privacy and security requirements, but the established services in Ontario do). Also specialists do know who the primary care provider is. They could follow up through telephone or other communication if they like.

It would be helpful to define in more detail PCN's and the clinical pathways. The reduction in wait list is impressive. Do the clinical pathways allow referrals to be declined? I found the first paragraph on pg 4 confusing.Line 14 refers to urgent referrals but what about non-urgent referrals. I would suggest expanding this and making it clearer

The first line in the discussion is wrong. This study does not address comparing specialist link to eConsult - it simply identifies awareness.

The limitations section is incomplete and includes things that aren't limitations

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.
Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
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No

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
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I recommend additional statistical review

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

Needs some language corrections before being published

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