Reviewer’s report

Title: Which family physician should I choose? The analytic hierarchy process approach in the selection of a family physician

Version: 2 Date: 27 January 2015

Reviewer: Mary Ann O’Brien

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for asking me to review this manuscript.

The authors studied the preferences of patients when choosing a family physician. They conducted focus groups then used an analytic hierarchy process to determine the attributes that patients ranked favorably in their family physician. They also examined the consistency of patient preferences.

I have several comments and suggestions that I believe will strengthen the manuscript.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The context for the study question is not clear. In the study setting, how much choice do patients really have in choosing their family physician?

2. Background. Page 3. The first page of the background section is too unfocused and could be more succinct and with supporting references. The importance of the study question is not clearly described. It is not clear if the authors are suggesting whether patients should use a normative decision-making process when choosing their family physician. What is the strength of existing evidence about patient decision-making in choosing a family physician (normative or otherwise)?

3. Background. Page 5. Please clearly state the primary and secondary research objectives at the end of the background section.


4.1. Please describe the ‘random’ process for selecting the focus groups.

4.2. The authors state that “the typical case sampling procedure was implemented.” The authors should provide additional description of this method.

4.3. The authors state that “the physicians were asked to recommend the names of those patients registered to them whom they treated on a daily basis.” The authors should provide an explanation for why patients were not asked to volunteer to participate in the study without asking their physician first.

4.4. Please state who conducted the focus groups. Were the focus groups audio-taped?

4.5. What were the demographic characteristics of the focus group members?
4.6. How was the analysis conducted and by whom? How was transparency of the analytic process ensured?

5. Methods. Page 6. Administration of the questionnaire. Additional details of the methods for administering the questionnaire are needed. How were patients selected for the survey? How many refused? Did patients complete the survey electronically or on paper? How was missing data handled? How was confidentiality ensured?

6. Page 7. The authors state that “It is assumed that the alternatives are independent when expressing preferences.” Do the authors believe that this assumption is valid for their study?

7. Page 8. Results. Characteristics of Participants. It would be helpful to understand what the authors mean by “…they had applied directly to the facilities as a first step while 37.5% [36] had applied as a second and third step.” Is there an application process for patients? As a minor point, a percentage sign is missing on line 122.

8. Page 9. Results. The authors state “In Figure 3 and the other comparison table, it is clear that, with an inconsistency ratio of 0.06 which is less than 0.1, the model works.” This sentence needs additional explanation. Note: The headings in Figure 3 are not in English.

9. Pages 10-11. Discussion. The authors should discuss under which circumstances the AHP method would be actually be used by patients to select a physician. Could the authors elaborate on how a patient would be able to assess the characteristics of the physician prior to actually making a choice of physician?

10. Reference #10 is repeated.

11. The figures are duplicated.

12. Several relevant references appear to be overlooked by the authors. See References (below)

References:


Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.