Reviewer's report

Title: A pilot study evaluating alternative approaches of academic detailing in rural family practice clinics

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Reviewer: Jan C. Frich

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This manuscript reports from a study with the aim of “evaluating different models of delivering academic detailing in rural family practice”. In the methods section of the abstract a new aim is formulated: “… to assess the feasibility, effectiveness, and satisfaction with academic detailing delivered face-to-face as compared to a modified approach using distance-learning technology”. In the background section of the paper a new aim is formulated: “… to gain experience with the feasibility, and evaluate the effectiveness, of a distance-learning academic detailing model relative to a more traditional face-to-face approach”.

In total, 12 doctors participated in the face-to-face group (two clinics), and 29 doctors participated in the distance learning group (two clinics). Different distant learning technologies were used in the two clinics (video conference and flash enabled learning module).

I actually find the qualitative data in table 2 most interesting, because they give some hints about positive and negative aspects of the distant-learning approach to academic detailing, and could have also given more specific hints about how differences could be further investigated/evaluated. I think the study, as it is presented in this manuscript, provides few new insights.

Major compulsory revisions:

#1: The aim should be clarified.

#2: This is a small study, with in fact three different interventions (face-to-face, video conference, and flash-enabled learning module. The authors have ambitions of detecting differences between the face-to-face and distant learning groups, but as on could expect (one group with n = 12), the material is too limited to show any statistical differences. With respect to this aim, the design is far from ideal.

#3: What is a “needs-assessment focus group”? Is it a group interview to assess educational needs?

#4: It is unclear what the numbers and columns in the figures means.

#5: Table 1: RUCA category needs to be explained. What do the figures mean? Listing all specific dates for the visits is not necessary.
#6: This study is presented as a “pilot study”. What is the take home message for further research in this field?

**Level of interest:** An article of insufficient interest to warrant publication in a scientific/medical journal

**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