Reviewer's report

Title: The use of a pre-operative scoring system for the prediction of phacoemulsification case difficulty and the selection of appropriate cases to be performed by trainees

Version: 1 Date: 24 August 2006

Reviewer: Michael Clarke

Reviewer's report:

General

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
I don't think it is clear in the methods section that the questionnaires were completed post operatively. I would be interested to know why the statistical test used was chosen.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

It was not immediately apparent to me why the authors had chosen not to use data on cases which had had complications, as these would be, by definition, among the most difficult cases. The authors argue that this is because these cases would automatically be graded as difficult by the operating surgeon. However this may well have been a correct interpretation and by excluding them the authors have run the risk of excluding the most useful cases for their argument. The underlying problem is that the perceived difficulty as gauged by the operating surgeon is a very subjective estimate and it might be useful in further studies to include more objective measures eg phaco time, the need for vitrectomy. I would also argue with their use of numbers of cases performed as a guide to competence.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I have no competing interests