Reviewer's report

Title: OSCEs, Psychiatry and the CASC. Same evidence, different judgement

Version: 1 Date: 14 March 2011

Reviewer: Cees Van der Vleuten

Reviewer's report:

This is great essay on the value of the OSCE used in the psychiatry membership examination in the UK, using my own quality characteristics as a structure. The paper puts the OSCE in the right perspective. The paper is a joy to read and would add significantly to the literature in terms tackling some of the ‘myths’ that exist around OSCEs. The author builds up his case very elegantly, based on appropriate literature. Many OSCEs tend to reward trivial skills, particularly at the postgraduate level and cater to a rather reductionist view on competence assessment. I think therefore this paper also has relevance for postgraduate training in general.

If I were to have critique, then I am slightly disappointed by the fact that not more empirical data are presented around the CASC. Some of these analyses are pretty easy to conduct (e.g. the reliability estimations).

Small Discretionary Revisions:
Page 1: CASC is in the title as an abbreviation. Is your audience familiar with the term?
Page 3: Use of the first person is a matter of taste
Page 16: Reference 33: Van Theil should be Van Thiel

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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