Author's response to reviews

Title: Career influences among final year dental students. A survey of factors influencing the decision to enter private practice immediately after graduation.

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Author's response to reviews: see over
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Dear Editors:

We wish to thank both of our reviewers for their thoughtful input. We have taken their suggestions into consideration and revised our manuscript accordingly. Point-by-point responses are described below.

1. Competing interests - if the authors are involved in the education of the students surveyed and/or those likely to undertake specialist postgraduate study, it may be considered that the authors have competing interests. The authors may wish to reflect on this point.

We acknowledge that two co-authors (SM and RK) do participate in dental education at the College of Dentistry. However, none of the authors are involved in curricular design. Therefore, we do not believe that this represents a conflict of interest. We are careful not to advocate for any career path in this manuscript and attempt to let the conclusions speak for themselves.

2. Abstract - suggest that the authors include more descriptive results to provide a clearer overview of the findings; for example, the proportion interested in private practice, married.

We addressed this issue within our abstract and added in greater detail about the results of our study.

3. Background - last paragraph on page 5, the authors may wish to reflect on whether the five-fold increase is in 'real terms'.

We revisited the 2011 ADEA annual survey and revised this citation to represent “constant dollars” of the average educational debt of public school participants from 1990 to 2011 – a three-fold increase.

4. Background or Discussion re debt- a little more explanation of the reasons for the level of debt, eg the cost of fees in this dental college and living expenses would be helpful.

This topic is covered within the discussion section explaining the tuition, fees, and expenses a student can expect over their four year education.

5. Discussion of findings - it is important to relate these findings to the Iowa context, rather than just the national context. This is particularly important in relation to career opportunities (there may not be as many specialist opportunities as some other states) and highlight any special features of the Iowa Dental School. It is important to recognize that they only relate to one school and further collaborative research should be undertaken.
Within the discussion section, we added a paragraph describing conditions at the University of Iowa College of Dentistry, tuition and fee data along with the understanding that these findings were only at this one particular university and collaboration with others is critical.

6. Conclusion - the conclusion should be rewritten and shortened so that it summarizes what the findings of the model 'suggest', and perhaps make any valid recommendations. The authors should avoid going beyond the findings and including discussion points; rather the latter should be moved to the relevant section.

We shortened the conclusion and focused on the findings of our model. Content was moved to the discussion section where appropriate.