Reviewer's report

Title: The Quality of Postgraduate Medical Training in Integrative Medicine within the Public Health Care Systems of Germany and Switzerland. The Example of Anthroposophic Hospitals

Version: 2 Date: 5 February 2014

Reviewer: Donald M Marcus

Reviewer's report:

Major complete revisions

1. The aim of the study is to evaluate the perceived quality of the integration of anthroposophic medicine into postgraduate medical training in German and Swiss hospitals. The authors do not explain what they mean by “quality”. The data concern the satisfaction of trainers and trainees with their learning environment and working conditions. That is one dimension of quality, but a more important issue is: what competencies are achieved, i.e., what have the trainees learned? In American postgraduate medical training, residents take examinations every year to test their knowledge of the discipline and to identify areas that need improvement. A more accurate title for the paper would be satisfaction with the integrative medicine training, rather than the quality of the training.

2. Which of the differences between groups in Fig. 1 and the tables are statistically significant? The meaning of the authors’ statement on p. 7, “As we conducted a complete survey, differences were not calculated statistically”, is unclear. As noted below, the tables lack important information. Assuming that the numbers in the tables represent means and standard deviations, many of the standard deviations are as large as the differences between groups, which suggests that the differences are not statistically significant. The discussion of the reasons for the differences between Swiss and German programs, and the influence of department sizes, is not informative without knowing whether the differences are significant.

 Minor essential revisions

1. Figure 1 and the tables are difficult to understand because they lack basic information.

The 6-point rating scale is explained for the first time in table 3, which limits comprehension of the figure and tables 1 and 2. Do the numbers in the tables represent means and standard deviations, and do the numbers in parentheses represent the number of questionnaires analyzed?

2. The Discussion is overly long, repetitive and speculative, and should be shortened considerably.
Level of interest: An article of insufficient interest to warrant publication in a scientific/medical journal

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I have no financial or personal competing interests.