Reviewer's report

Title: The Missions of Medical Schools: The Pursuit of Health in the Service of Society

Authors:

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Reviewer: Dr Joseph O'Donnell

Level of interest: A paper of considerable general medical or scientific interest

Advice on publication: Accept without revision

Thank you for the opportunity to review this most interesting paper. It is the first of its kind that I have seen and I believe it should be useful to all medical schools in reviewing their mission documents, to accrediting bodies in their evaluation of schools and to agencies that might support the activities of a given school. Here are some specific comments:

1) This paper by Lewkonia reviewing the missions of medical schools is well done. The template in table 2 will be a most useful tool to standardize school mission statements, to encourage the writers of such statements to be more specific and the evaluators of schools to better ask if there is evidence that these objectives are being met.
2) The background data including the 1497 mission of King's College, Aberdeen which makes up the subtitle (the pursuit of health in the service of society) is most interesting. The proposals from the RSM document specifying what should be included in school mission statements are also interesting and important backgroud. I'm not sure if many writers of mission statements are aware of these suggestions and this information in itself makes this paper worth reading.
3) The analysis of the themes of the multiple mission statements analyzed is quite perceptive and helpful and the illustrations from mission documents are ingenious and provide a wonderful framework for evaluation.
4) The purpose and semantics section on p11-12 should be quite helpful to mission statement crafters, especially the table of words used to categorize performance and desirable attributes.
5) Thank you to Dr Lewkonia for producing this very useful article. Now it's up to the rest of us to see if our schools are living their mission and even more importantly to ask the question, is the mission the right one. This article gives us a framework to do this. Wouldn't it be great if the missions were clear, consistent with what our constituents want and there was evidence that we were acheiving our goals? Wouldn't it be even greater if all our schools came closer to the 1497 mission of "the pursuit of health in the service of society"?
That's not a bad one at all!

Competing interests:

None declared.