Reviewer’s report

Title: A Comparative Evaluation of the Effect of Internet-based CME Delivery Format on Satisfaction, Knowledge and Confidence

Version: 1 Date: 21 August 2009

Reviewer: Julie Hadley

Reviewer’s report:

Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached) 1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
I think that the question does not fully acknowledge the two types of format evaluated and needs to be refined.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
There are considerable deficiencies in the information presented and as such make it difficult to judge the validity of the research and these need to be addressed.

- Who are the population and how did they assign the group allocations?
- The authors need to fully define the differences in the two methods evaluated and discuss the effects of these on the findings in more detail. For example they need to be able to stipulate or consider which factors in the deliver methods may have affected the results - Is it the delivery format or the asynchronous discussions with peers which may have resulted in the differences presented?
- Where there any other differences in the interventions and apart from the format of delivery and the discussions. Were the groups treated the same? How long was the on-demand made available for?
- Was the courses free or paid? Was attendance mandatory and a requirement of registration or elective?
- please give more details about the contents of the on-line tutorials did they differ between the two groups in any way?
-what are the differences between the knowledge assessment questions and the confidence questions - please give examples of the type of questions asked to assess confidence
- Were the assessment instruments used assessed for reliability and validity, and how were they assessed? How were the assessments administered, were they administered differently for each group i.e. on-line or by the facilitator?
- was a pilot study undertaken?
- Why were there such big differences in the numbers in the groups? What caused this and what effect does this have on the findings?
- The results section needs to be in more detail and p values need to be stipulated in the text

3. Are the data sound?
More detail needs to be presented about the disproportionate numbers in the groups and the effect that this may have upon the data?

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
See above comments

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
See above comments

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
More information is needed on the limitations of the different types of delivery format

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
The authors do comment on previous research (page 10) about individual learner participation but it is not referenced 8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
The authors need to stipulate if it is indeed the format of delivery (scheduled or on demand) or the differences in the intervention i.e. facilitated discussions that have resulted in the differences in the findings and acknowledge these in the discussion 9. Is the writing acceptable?
Yes

- Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions