Reviewer’s report

Title: Training auscultatory skills: computer simulated heart sounds or additional bedside training? A randomized trial on third-year medical students.

Version: 1 Date: 28 August 2009

Reviewer: Chun-Ju Hou

Reviewer’s report:

A. Major compulsory revisions

1. Introduction and Discussion:
Authors should further clarify the research hypothesis and purpose of this study and interpret the results in discussion. They posed the question whether teaching programs with technical devices facilitate learning skills or if the benefits merely are due to more time spent on the subject. The CAS is made for aiding auscultation learning as a bedside training is inconvenient or not available. It cannot replace a bedside training.

Authors expected to find advantages of using the CAS. However, the results show the mean score sum in CAS and bedside training groups is low. They explained that students have poor auscultation skills due to too brief auscultation training. I agree to authors’ proposition that proficiency in auscultation skills might be due to more time spent on learning auscultation or higher motivation. The score difference between two groups has no statistical significance. It implies two groups have the same effect on auscultation learning.

2. Methods:

1) Design of the study
The procedure and duration from training to examination for two groups should be described in detail. Authors described the time span between training to exam was 5-6 weeks. In the study the period of teaching was two weeks. What was the design of the experiment during the following 3-4 weeks?

2) Test of auscultation skills
Totally seven patients participated in the experiment, but only four patients had been assigned number in Table 1.

3) Statistics
Authors should describe the purpose of Pearson test in the study.

3. Results:
Authors has described that student’s t test is used for comparing the CAS group to bedside training group. The reason why post hoc analysis was used is not described in Method.
4. Conclusions:
The text of the article has not a ‘conclusions’ section.

B. Minor essential revisions
1. References
The format is in need of revision.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.