Reviewer's report

Title: Mentoring programs for medical students - a review of the PubMed literature 2000 - 2008

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Reviewer: Gudrun Edgren

Reviewer's report:

I think this a very interesting paper. It deals with a very interesting field, namely mentoring for medical students. The paper is well and clearly written, and methods are adequate and well described. The results are clearly reported and the discussion is balanced and supported by the data.

However, some limitations are mentioned only briefly. It concerns the definitions of mentoring and whether some of the papers reported are actually about mentoring or if the words supervisor, tutor or coach would sometimes better describe what has been going on. The way I interpret the definition of mentor in the manuscript, it cannot be used for programs where the goal is to increase interest in a certain career. Since some of the effects reported came from these papers, this can be considered a limitation. I think the paper would benefit from a more thorough discussion of the limitations of the reported papers.

The authors discuss limitations due to weak evidence of results in the reported studies. I believe that the conclusion that “at European medical schools mentoring should receive more appreciation” is not yet possible to draw. Mentoring programs are expensive and the evidence of their value is still weak. I would recommend a conclusion that mentoring programs should be developed and tested and that they should be rigorously evaluated in order to add more knowledge to this interesting field.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests