Reviewer's report

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

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Reviewer: Elmar Braehler

Reviewer's report:

The paper uses all relevant publications of the years 2000 to 2008 listed in the database PubMed for a review of mentoring programmes for medical students.

The paper is well structured and search results are clearly documented and include publications referring to single interventions and reviews. Search results include type of mentoring programme, goal, forms of evaluation and effects, additional information.

The research question is well defined, limitations reflected.

The authors do correctly describe the multitude of definitions for mentoring in scientific literature and do lean their definition towards the SCOPME (Standing Committee in Postgraduate Medical and Dental Education) definition as it has been “mostly cited” before.

A reference to alternative definitions would have been helpful to the reader.

Above, the reviewer misses a contribution to the discussion about correct definition of mentoring e.g. by mentioning the concepts used in the publications under review and respectively use of SCOPME concept.

The discussion throws a glance at differences between education systems and mentoring programmes in USA compared to Europe. Consequences referred to are reflected as limitations of the European situation.

Practical interest could have been raised if authors would have indicated how to design a mentoring programme taking European conditions into account rather than focusing on the problem analysis.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field.

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: The manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

There are no competing interests.