Author's response to reviews

Title: Discrimination against International Medical Graduates in the U.S. Residency Program Selection Process

Authors:

Norman A Desbiens (nadesbiens@gmail.com)
Humberto J Vidaillet Jr (vidaillet.humberto@mcrf.mfldclin.edu)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Reviewer’s report
Title: Discrimination against International Medical Graduates in the U.S. Residency Program Selection Process
Version: 2 Date: 1 August 2009
Reviewer: Amy Hagopian

Reviewer’s report:
This paper is a polemic attack... Merriam Webster’s Online Dictionary defines a polemic as “an aggressive attack on or refutation of the opinions or principles of another.” Rather this paper is an objective endeavor. It asks a question, follows a methodology and reports its findings.

Data consist of a review of findings from three published papers... The data for the manuscript come from a review of 1543 Medline papers from 1961 to the present. Perhaps incorporating the search strategy into the methods section would help clear up any potential confusion. We will discuss this matter with the editor.

The conclusion is that residency programs preferentially admit USMGs over IMGs... These are findings from the study, not conclusions.

... and that this is unfortunate because it undermines the value of meritocracy. The reviewer misunderstands our writing. These findings do not undermine the value of meritocracy, but they do undermine the claim that recruitment of residents to U.S. programs is based on meritocracy.

Authors do admit "IMGs impose an extra educational burden on US residency programs, especially in the first year of residency," but dismiss this concern... We do not dismiss these concerns. We bring them up and make a referenced statement that with the proper work they can be overcome. The issue at hand is whether the benefits outweigh the burdens.

There is no acknowledgment whatsoever of a growing concern about depleting the physician workforce in countries of origin... This matter is outside the scope of our paper. Our study looked at whether there is discrimination in the recruiting process in the U.S.

Methods are trivial... We do not understand how a search of nearly 40 years of the medical literature, including a search of over 1500 papers for scientific studies, could be considered trivial. Note that none of the papers that we identified were labeled as research, so a Pubmed search using tags alone would have missed the data that we found.

...findings are irrational... We do not understand how objective findings can be irrational. Interpretations of findings can be irrational, but we think that we used logical thought processes.
...and conclusions are not helpful to the discussion. The concluding paragraph calls for “more openness in and monitoring of the residency selection process,” We fail to see how a call for more transparency can be unhelpful.

An article of insufficient interest to warrant publication... We think that many national and international readers would be very interested in this article.

Needs some language corrections... We would be glad to work with the editor to address any solecisms.

Reviewer's report
Title: Discrimination against International Medical Graduates in the U.S. Residency Program Selection Process
Version: 2 Date: 26 July 2009
Reviewer: Rodney Crutcher
Reviewer's report:

...find additional relevant literature. The reviewer makes a good point. We have divided up the second paragraph of the discussion section to have a stand-alone limitations paragraph and have added a sentence to point out this limitation.

There is much more opinion than data. We agree and strongly believe that we should not ignore that data that are available.

...and have made additions and revisions to the Results and Discussion. I anticipate these changes will strengthen what is already a good manuscript. We had originally submitted the manuscript as an editorial and were asked by the editor to submit it as a research article, requiring us to reformat the manuscript and detail the methods section.

...the phrase '..Selection Process'...greater clarity would help. The reviewer makes an excellent point. We know of some, but very few, programs that actively recruit international medical graduates. Most programs are flooded with unsolicited applications. We will use “selection” or “selection process” throughout the manuscript, except in the section where we discuss the affect of image on recruiting of U.S. graduates. That is a recruitment matter.

...in the abstract there is reference to both the 'recruiting process' and also 'recruitment process'. I believe 'recruitment process' works best. We agree.
The limitations of this study need further comment. We have added a sentence to the limitation section.

The authors work - if published - has the potential to contribute to this engagement. That is our sincere hope.