Reviewer's report

Title: Undergraduate medical student perceptions and use of Evidence Based Medicine: A qualitative study

Version: 1 Date: 26 April 2010

Reviewer: Geert JMG van der Heijden

Reviewer's report:

Overall comment

I think this qualitative study is relevant for medical education, since we will need further understanding of (differences in) perceptions and use of EBM of medical students and clinicians. Many efforts have been put into the education of EBM and its important to find out what works and what not.

In this study we learn more about students’ perceptions. In addition, the students' observations of clinical practice also provided clues on the what and why of clinicians' EBM behaviour.

Minor essential revisions

* methods; methodological approach; 3rd sentence: you stated that focus groups were guided by grounded theory. I agree that part of your study resembles grounded theory, but I'd rather call it a grounded theory approach where your interview schedule for the focus groups is also guided by previous research. In methods; format; last sentence, you stated that "The facilitator was guided by the same interview schedule, which was informed by a previous survey on the topic." Using this combined approach allowed you to use previous research (providing a structure) and allowed you to probe for responses and to elaborate on other relevant issues raised (providing unstructured exploration).

Discretionary revisions

* abstract; conclusions; 'and application to clinical disciplines': what do you mean here? Do you mean that medical students need to integrate their newly acquired knowledge and skills on EBM into practice during their internships? If so, then the term 'clinical disciplines' is confusing, because in the article you describe differences between medical disciplines that could have impact on the practice of EBM. So, to me you could also be referring to how to these differences and how to deal with these.

* background; first paragraph; last two sentences: (1) Competency in EBM ... to the construct. Why did you add 'to the construct' at the end of this sentence? It seemed superfluous to 'in a construct' used earlier in this sentence and it confused me on what you meant. (2) "Therefore,..." Here you refer to earlier passages that provide arguments for linking achieving competency in EBM to promoting lifelong learning in practice. To me it is not clear which arguments you
are referring to.

* background; third paragraph; first three sentences: (1) what do you mean with 'the effectiveness of teaching EBM to students'? I guess you mean easy to measure aspects like improving EBM knowledge and skills. To me, effectiveness of teaching EBM also comprises attitudes, beliefs and uptake, but these aspects have been paid less attention to. A suggestion would be: "The majority of studies to date have focused on the effectiveness of teaching EBM to students, in terms of improving EBM knowledge and skills, across...post-graduate). However, few have explored other aspects of effectiveness of teaching EBM, like student attitudes, beliefs and actual uptake of EBM principles."

* Methods; data analysis; 5th sentence: "Focus groups were conducted until the data reached a point of theoretical saturation." Does this mean that you cancelled the other upcoming focus groups or that you upfront estimated that four focus groups would be likely to render theoretical saturation as your sample was rather homogenous and already comprised 23 participants (only differing in rural/urban hospital)?

* discussion; 6th paragraph; 3rd sentence: "... but also provides a framework on which future quantitative evaluations may be based on." I do not understand what you mean by this. Why and how could this framework be of use for future quantitative evaluations?

* Conclusions; 4th&5th sentence: "Journal clubs have the potential to bring together...". To my knowledge, journal clubs were not mentioned earlier in this article. Why do you mention them here? Is this based on literature or own experiences that support the use of journal clubs to progress EBM? In addition, you have not explicitly linked journal clubs to your findings in this study?

**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