Author's response to reviews

Title: Medical Students' Perceptions of the Educational Environment at an Iranian Medical Sciences University

Authors:

Teamur Aghamolaei (taghamolaei@hums.ac.ir)
Ismael Fazel (ifazel@hums.ac.ir)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor in Chief

Journal of BMC Medical Education

Article: Medical Students' perceptions of Educational Environment at an Iranian Medical Sciences University

Reference number: 1068603872355238

Version: 3

Thank you for the opportunity to re-revise our manuscript, reference number as 1068603872355238. Attached, please find the responses to the reviewers’ reports on the manuscript. It would be most appreciated if you consider the answers to be reviewed.

Also the manuscript has been edited by BioMedES Ltd.

I sincerely thank you in advance.

Best Wishes

Teamur Aghamolaei, Corresponding author

Department of Public Health, School of Health, Hormozgan University of Medical Sciences, Bandar Abbas, Iran.

Ph: 0098 0761 3338583 Fax: 0098 0761 3338584

E- mail Address: taghamolaei@hums.ac.ir
Reviewer's report
Title: Medical Students' perceptions of Educational Environment at an Iranian Medical Sciences University
Version: 2 Date: 17 September 2010
Reviewer: Susan Miles
Reviewer's report:
Reviewer’s comments following authors’ revisions to “Medical students’ perceptions of educational environment at an Iranian medical sciences university” Generally the article is clearer and better focused now. However, some of the issues raised in the original review have not been dealt with adequately. There are also errors in some of the new text that need dealing with.

Minor essential revisions
1) Pages 3, 5 and 7
Whilst the authors clarified that the basic sciences and pathophysiology course and the clinical sciences course are singular in their response letter, they have not made the necessary changes to the text on these pages. This still needs to be done.
I.e. Page 3 “a basic sciences and pathophysiology course and half to a clinical sciences course …”
• This was corrected.

2) Page 3
The new text has spelling mistakes that need correcting - the text should read: “It is a tool that can be used to pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses of an educational institution, compare the performance and effectiveness of different medical schools, and make …”
• This was corrected.

3) Page 4
The explanation of why only 210 of the available 350 students were included in the study is still not adequate. It should include some of the information that the authors provided in response to the reviewer’s query as the reader needs this information too.
E.g. “The school has approximately 350 general medicine students, but not all were present studying at the university at the time of the study. Thus, the questionnaires were distributed to 210 medical students, the maximum number of students who were present at the time of study”
- This was done.

4) Page 6
At the end of the new text there is a missing “s” for “indicate”
I.e. “received the mean score of 2 or less that indicates problem areas”
- This was corrected.

5) Page 7
The new text explaining the difference between students on the two courses requires editing as it is unclear.
a) Firstly what is meant by “adaptation with the school”?
- This sentence was deleted from discussion.

b) Secondly, the next sentence regarding the findings at the Indian medical school are not clear - how do they differ from the author’s findings?
- This was corrected.

c) Thirdly, this reviewer suggested that the authors discussed why they thought the students on the two courses rated the educational environment differently.
The authors have taken an argument they made for why students in the higher years rated the educational environment more positively than students in the lower years and transferred it to explain the basic sciences / clinical difference.
They have also added a statement that “medical students in clinical course become more familiar with their professional than basic sciences and
pathophysiology course.” This new statement requires clarification as to why the authors feel this, what do they mean by familiar, and why it might have an impact on perception of the educational environment.

- These sentences were deleted from discussion.

In doing this, the authors might want to consider the impact on ratings due to the fact that the basic sciences students did not complete the clinically related DREEM questions. This issue has not been raised in the paper at all, as I’m sure the Reviewer who requested this information be added and discussed will note in their response.

- This was done.

6) The new text discussing the lack of gender differences and the need for more, larger studies needs editing. Whilst the authors have now clarified that more studies should be done to see if the lack of gender differences is replicated; they have a new additional statement also recommending more studies due to the lack of generalisability, but they have not explained the reasons for additional research here so this section of the Discussion is not any clearer.

   a) I.e. the authors should state why the study lacks generalisability, rather than just saying that it has limited generalisability - this is needed to explain why they recommend further research.

   - This sentence was deleted from discussion.

   b) Also, the word “was” is not needed in the sentence “to check the lack of gender differences found in this study.” Discretionary revisions

   - This sentence was deleted from discussion.

1) Page 5
Generally the description and presentation of the results is much clearer now. However, the new text describing the findings for each subscale would be clearer still if it did not swap between items that were rated less than 2 and items rated over 2 between the descriptions of the different subscales (e.g. reporting the two items that received scores over 2 for
perceptions of learning, then the one that received a score of less than 2 for perceptions of teachers in the next sentence).

- This was done.

2) Page 6
Regarding the new text - the first sentence would read better if it were reordered slightly i.e. “In a study conducted by Al-Hazimi et al. in three traditional and one innovative medical school, the means scores for all the traditional medical schools were lower compared…”

- This was done.

3) Page 6
It would be useful to add the explanation that a mean score of 3.5 or over indicates particularly positively rated items for clarity.

- This was done.

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

**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

**Reviewer’s report**

**Title:** Medical Students' perceptions of Educational Environment at an Iranian Medical Sciences University

**Version:** 2  **Date:** 2 September 2010

**Reviewer:** Sue Whittle

**Reviewer’s report:**
This paper has been improved by the authors in response to referees’ comments.
No compulsory revisions
No essential revisions
Discretionary revisions
1. I note from the authors' responses that the basic science students did not answer some of the DREEM questions - i.e. those relating to clinical contact. I think it would be helpful for this to be explained in the method section - i.e. exactly which questions were excluded for these students. Lack of significant clinical contact is an inherent drawback of this questionnaire when used in the early years of almost all medical courses, but acknowledging how you dealt with the issue would be helpful to other researchers.
   • This was done and these questions were added to the text.

2. Discussion paragraph 2 'In a study conducted by Al-Hazimi et al. in three traditional and one innovative medical schools for all traditional medical schools, the mean scores were lower compared withinnovative medical school.'; This would be more easily understandable if rewritten, e.g. 'In a study conducted by Al-Hazimi et al. in three traditional and one innovative medical schools, the mean scores for all traditional medical schools were lower compared with the innovative medical school.' 3. In places the English does not flow as well as it could, but this does not affect the overall message of the paper.
   • This was corrected.

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