Reviewer's report

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

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Reviewer: Sue Whittle

Reviewer's report:

DREEM has been widely used to evaluate educational environment at various medical schools, and this study of an Iranian Medical School adds to these studies. However, I think you could add more value to your data by a more in-depth analysis of results, and a clearer attempt to compare results with those from other similar traditional schools, and with schools which operate different curricula.

Minor essential revisions

1. Abstract - line 9 DREEM, not DERRM

2. Methods. It is stated that questionnaires were distributed to 210/350 students, but it is unclear how/why these students were selected. It is misleading to give a response rate out of 210, instead of 350 - this should be rectified.

3. Strictly speaking, a non-parametric data analysis method such as Mann-Whitney, should be used for non-parametric data. If a t-test is used, as in this paper, it's use should be justified, and reference should be made to this in support of inferences drawn.

4. The DREEM questionnaire is specifically designed for medical curricula, and so contains a number of references to patient contact, e.g. items 6, 18, 11 - and also perhaps 21 & 31 to some extent. I assume that the basic science students have no clinical contact, so are unable to answer these questions sensibly. You ought to address this in your discussions - if you showed the scores for all the items for both science/clinical cohorts, this might lend itself to discussion of this problem. (see below)

5. In the results section, it would be very helpful to include the results from other medical schools in a table alongside your own data. This would make it much easier to compare the results than including them in the text. You could also clarify which medical schools use a comparable, traditional curriculum, and which PBL/integrated curricula. A more thorough discussion of the comparisons would be very valuable.

Discretionary revisions

6. Background - I would question the use of the word 'efficiency' in relation to educational environment (used twice, para 1, line 4, & para 3, line 6). I would
suggest 'effectiveness' instead.

7. It would also be helpful to show the item scores for the science/clinical cohorts, and discuss where the differences between the two groups lie.

8. Try to avoid vague references to scores as 'decent' 'neither too positive, nor too negative'. On a 0-4 scale, as used here, you could regard a score of 2 as neutral, below 2 as negative and above 2 as positive - this would make your descriptions clearer.

9. At the end of your discussion you refer to the possibility that clinical students rate educational environment more highly than the basic sciences students simply because they are more familiar with the education system. This suggests that the educational environment does not change between the basic science and clinical parts of the course, which seems unlikely. Perhaps you could discuss this in more depth?

10. You might be clearer at the end of the paper how you plan to address the issues raised by the results of the DREEM survey. Any specific interventions that you have/intend to introduce would be of value to other schools who use this questionnaire.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**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