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 ...”

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 ...”

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”

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”

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”?

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?

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. 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.

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.

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

Discretionary revisions
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).

2) Page 6
Regarding the new text - the first sentence would read better if it were re-ordered 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 ...”

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.

**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