Reviewer’s report

Title: Exploring teaching approaches in supervision of medical students: an ethnographic study

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Reviewer: Eva Sundin

Reviewer’s report:

Comments to Authors

Summary
This paper reports results from a qualitative study of supervision of medical students. The study sets out to identify the techniques used by 12 medical supervisors who worked with 9 students.

Strength of paper
This research investigates an important topic.

Specific problems with the paper (all of which are Major Compulsory Revisions):

1. Abstract, background and rationale
   • It is unclear how the conclusion (p. 3) is linked to the results.
   • The paper would gain from a broader and richer background to the study. Although much still needs to be done in this area, previous studies of supervision for medical students, as reviewed by, for example, Kilminster and Jolly (2001) should be cited and discussed. As the introduction reads now, the Introduction provides a very limited background and justification for the study aim.
   • The study aim presented in the Abstract is much more complex than the formulation in the Introduction and Conclusion: the latter formulations seem more appropriate to the results report.
   • The authors report that they will assume “a-not-take-for-granted position. How is this be different from any other research endeavour?

2. Methods and procedure
   • The qualitative method is not explained in sufficient clarity and detail. The authors need to inform the reader what is meant by “ethnographic approach” and “informal interview”.
   • The design section does not give the expected information we expect to find here (That the study used a qualitative design where data were gathered from observation and interviews with medical students and their supervisors.
   • How were the participants selected?
3. Results
• As it stands, the results that are reported contain limited information. The authors mention elsewhere that there is a varied use of supervisor styles among the supervisors. It would strengthen the result presentation if this information were added.

4. Conclusion
• The discussion of findings is a summary of what is already said in the result section, and should be rewritten to emphasise points that the authors find specifically interesting.
• Limitations of the research should be clearly identified.
• There seem to be three implications of this work, however, either two of them (1,2) need to be clarified or there are in fact only two implications.

The report would benefit from additional proof reading

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

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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.