Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 Date: 3 July 2009

Reviewer: Andrew Grant

Reviewer's report:

This paper describes an interesting study which appears to be original in its approach and design.

Major compulsory revisions

1. At present the description of the data and that data analysis is inadequate. It appears that the data comprised field notes and audio recorded field notes made after the periods of observation. The authors do not give a clear description of how they developed their theoretical framework from these data. It is not currently possible to determine whether data were coded or whether the analysis of the data was rigorous. There is no way that the reader can be reassured that it is possible to make the conclusions made using this method of analysis from these data.

2. The conclusions section must be re-written. In its current form it is not confined to commenting on findings reported from the data.

In the second paragraph the authors describe the "three important findings" from this study. I believe that the principal outcome from this study is the authors theoretical framework. This is a theoretical framework developed on the basis of their findings. They then go on to report that all teachers displayed all behaviours but that some showed preference for some behaviours over others. The third "finding" was that which behaviours were demonstrated varied according to situational conditions. The authors repeat points 2 and 3 numerous times in the conclusions section.

I believe that the conclusions should start with the authors presenting their 7 point theoretical framework as developed from their analysis of the data from their ethnographic observations. They need, briefly, to state why this framework is sound.

I believe that the framework that the authors have developed has potential to be of great value in medical education. I believe that the authors should draw out more clearly that they have the links between their findings and established pedagogical theory.

Minor essential revisions

I believe that the authors should emphasise the value of this framework in helping medical teachers to gain greater insight into their teaching skills.
**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