Reviewer's report

**Title:** Virtual Patient Simulation: what do students make of it? A focus group study.

**Version:** 1 **Date:** 5 June 2010

**Reviewer:** William Heinrichs

**Reviewer's report:**

- Major Compulsory Revisions:
  1 – 16 subjects are divided into two groups, but I can find no comparison of results between the groups. So, the Methods must be clarified.
  2 – The Results seem to be authors' a priori statements that have been 'fortified' by comments made by the participants. One would rather expect to codify the comments of participants and extract coherent and meaningful results from them. The value of reviewing videos for making the observations has not been established. Why no questionnaires?
  3 – The Themes and Categories of Fig.1 seem to represent concepts of the authors for which they use comments elucidated during focus group activities to validate those concepts.
  4 – This report would become effective if the five themes are identified as hypothetical topics about which focus group discussion was directed to get responses.
  5 – A major emphasis on simulating real cases centers upon a photo of a patient that links to the scenario, and thus, direct transfer of virtual experience to medical practice. What if a different, a non-valid photo was substituted? Would the scenario no longer be relevant?

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

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**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.