Author's response to reviews

Title: Global health competencies and approaches in medical education: a literature review

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Melissa Norton, M.D.
Editor-in-Chief, *BMC Medical Education*

Dear Dr. Norton,

Thank you for reviewing our original manuscript, “Global health competencies and approaches in medical education: a literature review” for consideration for publication in *BMC Medical Education*. We are glad that the reviewers found the manuscript to be of “outstanding merit and interest” and to address “very important curricular change”. We welcome the chance to respond to the reviewers’ comments in more detail below.

**Reviewer 1**

We appreciate that the reviewer found the manuscript to be “very inclusive”. Regarding the comment that it “would be ideal if the authors included some examples of how their own medical student curriculum would change considering this [review]”, the following sentence was added to the discussion section.

> Page 9, paragraph 2
> “Locally, we have used the results of this review to add global burden of disease and travel associated health topic areas to our curriculum.”

**Reviewer 2**

We are glad that the reviewer found the manuscript to be of “outstanding merit and interest”. The following changes were made to clarify the search strategy used and address other issues raised by the reviewer. Table 3 and its associated text were removed as suggested by the reviewer.

The Ovid article search strategy is reproduced as follows:

1. World Health/ (18147)
2. Curriculum/ (23445)
3. Education, Medical, Undergraduate/ (7839)
4. Education, Medical/ (14345)
5. International Educational Exchange/ (1558)
6. 3 or 4 (22028)
7. 1 or 5 (19585)
8. 2 and 6 (5941)
9. 7 and 8 (63)
10. limit 9 to (English language and humans and yr="1996 - 2009") (52)

The difference between the 45 articles we found with the original search and the 52 identified in this repeat search is that the original search only included articles through the 4th week of January, 2009. “International educational exchange” was included as a search term to be as
inclusive as possible in identifying relevant articles. As global health is a relatively new field, we did not feel it was necessary to search the literature before 1996. However, we repeated the same search strategy including all years from 1950 forward and did not identify any additional relevant articles.

To clarify the search strategy used, the Methods section on page 4 has been rewritten as follows:

Relevant articles on global health competencies and teaching approaches were identified by applying similar search strategies to two databases, Ovid MEDLINE® and Web of Science. Also, previously identified articles were obtained from the McGill Global Health Programs files. The Ovid MEDLINE® search terms “world health” and “international educational exchange” were combined using the Boolean operator “OR” for the publication years 1996 to the 4th week of January 2009. The initial search used the terms “global health” and “international health”; however, these terms mapped to the subject heading “world health” in the Ovid MEDLINE® database. This procedure was repeated using the search terms “education, medical” and “education, medical, undergraduate”, which was then cross-referenced with the search term “competencies”. The resulting “education, medical”/“curriculum” set was combined with the resulting “world health”/“international educational exchange” set using the Boolean operator “AND”. The results of the search were limited to humans and English. The Web of Science search cross-referenced the terms “medical education”, “curriculum” and “global health” as topics for the publication years “all years” i.e. from 1900-1914 to January 2009. A research team comprised of all authors in this study, as well as the Liaison Librarian in the Life Sciences Library at McGill University, agreed upon these terms with the aim of avoiding researcher bias when selecting the articles. References from retrieved articles were reviewed to identify additional applicable publications.

Under discretionary changes discussion section has been changed as follows:
Comment: The first sentence of your final paragraph begins “This review suggests …”. It appears to me that this implies that this recommendation is supported by the data in the article. I would suggest altering this to “We suggest…"
Response: Done.

Figure 1 was redone to match the requested format. The corresponding text on pages 5 and 6 were rewritten to match Figure 1 as follows:

The results of the search strategy on global health competencies and educational approaches are summarized in Figure 1. The Ovid database search strategy yielded forty-five articles. The Web of Science search yielded two additional articles not found in the Ovid database.7-8 Twelve more articles were found through reviewing references from retrieved articles.6,9-19 Four other articles were obtained from the McGill Global Health Programs files.20-23 Combining all of the search efforts and removing duplications, 63 articles were available for consideration. After reviewing titles and abstracts, 47 were retained for further consideration. Following a full review of the remaining articles, 32 articles were felt to contain relevant information and included in the review.
All of the authors have reviewed the revised manuscript and approve it for submission. In consideration of the action of the *BMC Medical Education* in reviewing and editing this submission, the authors hereby transfer, assign, or otherwise convey all copyright ownership to the Journal in the event that such work is published in *BMC Medical Education*. Any questions or negotiations regarding the manuscript should be addressed to Dr. Brewer, the corresponding author.

Thank you for your helpful review of our manuscript. We hope we have addressed all of the issues raised by the reviewers. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

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