Reviewer’s report

Title: Factors confounding the assessment of reflection. Critical review

Version: 1 Date: 15 August 2011

Reviewer: Sarah Ross

Reviewer’s report:

This article provides a well written discussion of a topical subject – reflection for healthcare practitioners.

Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

The article uses a lack of coherence about reflection in the literature as its starting point, but I am not convinced that it gives a particularly helpful overview of this issue. Little evidence is provided for this stance. Instead, the main thinkers in the field are briefly discussed. This does not seem to have been undertaken in a systematic manner. The authors then attempt to build their own model of reflection. There are 2 main issues with this. Firstly, a convincing argument against supporting an existing model has not been made. Secondly, the addition of a further model to the literature may only make the situation first. I appreciate that the authors have attempted to pull together many aspects of the literature in to one coherent whole, however while this is attractive, it seems to me to be hampered by a lack of theoretical, experimental or other methodology. Again, a lack of assurance for the reader that a systematic approach has been taken is problematic.

The next concern I have is about the lack of testing of this model. While I can see that this is intended in the future, it might be more helpful to give the reader some confidence that this model is valid.

Finally, I am not sure that encouraging more context and description in reflection is useful. While I agree that it may help assessment of reflection, there is a danger that learners provide too much description to the detriment of reflection. In more structured situations (i.e. reviewing and discussing filmed consultations) it may be possible to do this without too much difficulty, but it could be unhelpful in written reflections.

Having said all this, the model seems to have face validity, and the mapping of indicators which could then be used to produce objective criteria for assessment is attractive.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Sentence in abstract – “Until further research…” - doesn’t make sense.

There is a word missing from the first sentence of background section.
Paragraph 2 in background needs references to back up statements.
ALACT model should be “Trial” not “Trail”.
Title page does not give requested author info.
What is an introspection skill? Is this a well understood phrase?
“In summary…” sentence starting the final paragraph of the discussion reads badly.
“Actors” is an odd term to use in this context and may confuse readers.

**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