Reviewer's report

Title: A near-peer teaching program designed, developed and delivered exclusively by foundation doctors for final year medical students sitting the final objective structured clinical examination (OSCE).

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Reviewer: Olle Ten Cate

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BMC Medical Education - Review of: A near-peer teaching program designed, developed and delivered exclusively by foundation doctors for final year medical students sitting the final objective structured clinical examination (OSCE).’ by Mustafa S Rashid, Oluwaseun Sobowale and David Gore

General comment
This is a well written report, describing a nice example of a near-peer teaching endeavor, than will be helpful and stimulating, specifically for readers who are not very familiar with the topic. The authors, all personally involved in conducting the near-peer teaching project described, are clearly enthusiastic, which, given their evaluation results, is certainly justified.

At the same time, the report has some weaknesses. As a research report, aiming to draw conclusions, it is not a very strong design. The outcome measures are limited to self-administered questionnaires; the participation was voluntary (without information on the representativeness of the sample) and the teaching was supplementary to regular teaching, and meant for those who had to take an OSCE exam. Naturally, students about to take a heavy exam welcome additional, targeted teaching, probably no matter if near peers or staff would provide this. The major conclusion is therefore a feasibility one: recent graduates can successfully organise and deliver such a two-day course. It is a result worth publishing, but this has been done before. So the addition to the literature is limited. There is also a limitations to the generalisability: the authors designed and organised the course and recruited the near-peer teachers and carried out the evaluation and wrote the paper. Will this all be just as successful elsewhere or depend on the particular motivation and vision of a few students/graduates? I think these limitations should be recognised in the discussion section, maybe with more explicit elaboration of the conditions for success.

Specific comments
1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?

On page 4, last paragraph the question/aim for this paper combines the aims of the project (“..to design .. etc”; “..to create a platform..”) with he aims of the report
(“...to show that...”). Please disentagle.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
   - The authors should stipulate more details of the organisation of the project: who planned / co-ordinated the course? who recruited near-peer teachers?
   - to weigh the results, readers should know how representative the group of participants was: how many students were approached to participate to yield 125?
   - please add when the post course evaluation was administered. Directly or after a while?

3. Are the data sound?
Data are sound, but the results section has some redundancy. My proposal is to summarize the data in a few text lines per table and leave out all tables. This will reduce the paper length without any loss of message and increase the chances to be read. Readers do not need (or want) to read about all these details.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
   Generally yes.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
   See my comments above.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
   See my comments above
In addition, the authors should realise that evaluation directly after a training or condensed course are usually very favourable; it would be helpful to evaluate after a while, as participants look back.

Another limitation is that I would have liked to see is any effect of on OSCE results. This would not have been easy to investigate in the current design, but it should be mentioned as a limitation that is worth investigating in the future.

The whole section “future plans” should be left out of this journal article – nice that these plans exist but not relevant in this report. This also hold for the information that the authors have been friends for a long time and what their career plans are.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
   Yes. There is adequate coverage of the literature.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
   “foundation doctors” may not be understood in most countries outside UK. I would suggest ‘recent medical graduates’.
9. Is the writing acceptable?
Yes.

Details
- reference Bulte et al is listed twice (once with a typo)
- reference 23 has incomplete initials and names (please review all references and include all initials in appropriate)

Conclusions
- This paper needs revision, and can be reduced in length, but may then be publishable.

Major Compulsory Revisions
Rewrite the results section and the discussion section; make corrections in references

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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'