Reviewer's report

Title: Identification of core competencies for primary care of allergy patients using a modified Delphi technique

Version: 2 Date: 1 December 2010

Reviewer: Jill Foster

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MAJOR COMPULSORY REVISIONS

General Issues
- The Delphi method, as used, seems inadequate as a stand-alone strategy to develop a curriculum and establish programmatic learning objectives. Rather, it seems more appropriate to integrate findings from the Delphi process with other information about standard curriculum components, recent changes in best practices and known practice gaps to develop a post-graduate training program. I suggest that the author either reframes the findings as one of several elements that inform curriculum planning or offers a more compelling rationale for using the Delphi findings as the sole or central basis for curriculum planning.

Abstract
- No justification is provided for the abstract conclusion. Provide justification in the results section or choose a different conclusion, preferably one related to the primary findings of the study or the utility of the method.

Background Section
- Provide a rationale for using the Delphi technique rather than alternative strategies to guide post-graduate medical education planning

Methods
- Describe how the selected methods are similar or different from core principles of Delphi methodology
- Clarify the instructions and questions posed to participants in each round of the Delphi process in the Methods section. Did participants understand how their responses would be used?
- Describe the process for reviewing, collapsing, refining and organizing items between rounds. How were items that contained multiple concepts handled?

Conclusions
- Open conclusion section with a recap of the most significant findings from the Delphi process
- Comment on the quality of findings, findings that might not have been elicited through other strategies as well as gaps – important issues in allergic disease
management that weren't captured by the Delphi process relative to guidelines, established curriculum standards, and/or identified public health priorities

MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISIONS

General Issues
o Provide a rationale for including nurses on the panel
o Adopt a consistent terminology to refer to the following
# Rounds 1, 2 and 3; Questionnaires 1, 2 and 3???
# Invitees versus respondents
# Respondent groups

Methods
o Explain why a mean score of 3.25 was established as a cut point
o Elaborate on how findings were used to formulate learning objectives

Conclusions
o Explain how the conclusion that the panel endorsed a transprofessional educational program that supports team work deduced

DISCRETIONARY REVISIONS

Scope of Manuscript
o The author ambitiously sought to use a single idea generating process to identify critical knowledge across a wide spectrum of allergy diseases. The result is breadth, but not depth and important areas were inadequately addressed. In particular, a number of important issues in asthma were not addressed. Given the particularly striking omissions in asthma assessment and management during the Delphi process, the author may wish to refocus the manuscript more narrowly around the other allergic diseases.

o Consider reframing the paper around the utility, strengths, and limitations of the Delphi process in post-graduate medical education planning using the project as a context for discussing how-tos and lessons learned

General Issues
o The spectrum of allergic disease is often different in pediatric and adults. How was this issue handled? Are there gaps in pediatric allergy?

o Was any attempt made to distinguish between items generated by specialists versus generalists?

Background Section
o Consider providing an example of how findings from a Delphi-based process have been utilized to guide curriculum development.

Conclusions Section
Consider providing an alternative definition for “consensus” based on Delphi methodology literature

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

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**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