Reviewer's report

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

Version: 3 Date: 27 January 2011

Reviewer: Jill Foster

Reviewer's report:

General comments
The author has used an interesting qualitative approach to identify and prioritize core competencies in allergic disease management for the primary care setting. The ideas generated by the process have been organized into four broadly conceptualized domains and provide a snapshot of themes considered important in allergy and asthma care among both specialists and primary care physicians.

The authors have taken pains to respond to initial reviewer comments and have retained the paper’s initial emphasis on the assessment methods and findings. As a result, significant problems remain and the validity of the findings is questionable. The rationale for using a Delphi technique as a sole strategy to guide curriculum design is not well-supported in the manuscript. There are significant problems with how the Delphi method was implemented in this assessment as noted below. Findings from the assessment have not been critically evaluated relative to published guidelines or residency curricula to determine their quality and relevance. Also of concern, the writing style and organization do not follow conventional manuscript styles.

A few issues merit particular mention.
• The mean number of items generated by Round 1 respondents (80 items from 15 participants # 5-6 responses per respondent) seems low given the number of allergic diseases and the range of issues involved in diagnosis and management among different populations. This suggests that respondents may not have fully understood the Round 1 task. It also highlights the limitations of generating competencies across a wide spectrum using a single question.

• The stated intent of the Delphi process was to identify learning needs for post-graduate education, yet there is no indication that respondents were aware of this purpose. Respondents in Rounds 2 and 3 apparently assessed questionnaire items in terms of their overall importance as competencies, subsequently rating the vast majority of items as necessary. If instead they had been asked to rate the importance of each item for post-graduate education, it seems likely that the rating responses would have been more diverse and less skewed.

• The author offers no comment on assessment findings and gaps relative to published guidelines, established curricula, or other benchmarks. Without this
context, the quality and relevance of the findings is unclear.

**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