Reviewer’s report

Title: Stability of empathy among undergraduate medical students: A cohort study at one UK medical school.

Version: 1 Date: 25 August 2011

Reviewer: Hitomi U Kataoka

Reviewer’s report:

Authors analyzed the data from a longitudinal cohort questionnaire survey study of medical students in UK. They used Interpersonal Reactivity Index: IRI-EC (affective empathy) and IRI-PT (cognitive empathy) to measure empathy. Authors revealed that women outscored both affective and cognitive empathy. In addition, the decline of empathy was not seen in women.

In general, the study was well designed and carried out well. The findings add some insights on this field. However, several issues need to be addressed or clarified to improve the quality of manuscript.

Authors stated that “Many studies are cross sectional, preventing analysis of change in individuals over time.” “Few studies distinguish between results for men and women.” Although authors referred the article by Hojat et al (reference number 31), in other paragraph, this article should be also referred in page 5. In the article, longitudinal analysis of empathy of both men and women was reported. Such important previous study is to be mentioned (Page 5).

Reference number in the text should be listed in numerical order (Page 6, 10, 11).

Please add reference number 30 and 44 in the quotation in page 11 line 3. These articles also used Jefferson Scale of Physician Empathy.

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.