Reviewer's report

Title: An e-learning reproductive health module to support improved student learning and communication at a medical school in Egypt.

Version: 1 Date: 11 September 2011

Reviewer: Jane Currie

Reviewer's report:

The comments below are based on the questions suggested for use by reviewers by BioMed Central.

1. Major essential revisions

1a. Are the methods appropriate and well-described?

There is no explanation of how the focus groups / group discussions were recorded and analysed. Simply giving quotations without a thematic analysis of some kind is substandard. Even if the discussions were not transcribed and no formal analysis was undertaken, this should be explicitly stated.

1b. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

Partly – but the reference to communication in the title and aims is not followed through. No evidence is presented about improvement in student-student and student-teacher communication apart from one or two quotations (i.e. there is no thematic analysis of qualitative data from the focus groups). Make sure you link your aims with your conclusions.

2. Minor essential revisions

2a. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?

Percentages in general – it is confusing to remember how many were in each group, please include numerator/denominator as well as percentages. Regarding tables in general – include n-values so we can see how many people each response / dataset is referring to. In tables 2 and 4 please label more explicitly what the 4th column (labelled 95% CI) refers to.

2b. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?

The aim as stated in the abstract starts ‘Evaluate learning outcomes and students’ opinions…’. The phrase learning outcomes is confusing as this is usually used in the context of things students should achieve / learning objectives. Do you mean ‘Evaluate students’ learning / knowledge acquisition…’?
2c. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?

The title mentions communication – I am not sure that what they describe is communication, or perhaps the term is too broad / vague. If you mean ‘student-teacher interaction’ then state this.

The title also does not state what type of study this is (see BMC Medical Education advice for authors). Even the abstract does not make it instantly apparent what type of study design was used – please make this clear.

3. Discretionary revisions

3a. Is the writing acceptable?

I would suggest that you should have your manuscript reviewed / edited by a native English speaker. There are many slightly odd expressions and grammatical errors; I have tried to include a few below but it would be better to review with a native speaker.

Some inappropriate commas (e.g. abstract: Large enrollment, limits students’ discussions and interactions with instructors).

Some odd phrases +/- my suggestions for improvement e.g.

• imperative interactivities and interaction – you can delete 'imperative interactivities' without losing meaning. If you want to say interaction is compulsory then say so, imperative is not the same thing.

• Face-to-Face lectures (abstract) – lectures are face-to-face, this phrase does not increase understanding but adds confusion (and capitals are not necessary).

• Background paragraph 2: ...lecturer to maintain students’ attention

• Background paragraph 2: ...low student-faculty ratio is a necessity for quality education

Far too many abbreviations. Be wary of using too many abbreviations that are not in common usage – one or two is okay (eg PH public health, RH reproductive health), but the ones for the different scales are impossible to remember (you have to keep referring back) and not mentioned enough to be worth remembering (and therefore shouldn’t impact too heavily on word count).

3b. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?

Some, yes. It might be worth reiterating in the discussion that students volunteered to participate in the e-learning trial; this is likely to be a highly motivated group in terms of e-learning enthusiasm and reduces how generalisable the findings would be to an entire cohort (of 1500 students in this group's case).

3c. Some comments about how some of the limitations and reasons for non-participation could be overcome would be welcomed in the discussion. How would these findings be applied by institutions with similar constraints?
**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:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.