Reviewer’s report

**Title:** The impact of a facilitated peer mentoring pilot program on academic skills

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 26 September 2011

**Reviewer:** Ann Kearney

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Review for BioMed Central

Article: The positive impact of a facilitated peer mentoring pilot project on academic skills of women faculty"

Reviewer: Anne Kearney, PhD RN

Major compulsory revisions

There is an inconsistency in the results of this pilot project. The abstract states there were two published manuscripts and three invited to do revision and resubmission. Paragraph two in results section state there are six papers in press or had been published and two others were invited to do revision and resubmission.

I found myself confused by the participants in the study: mentors or mentees. The kick off workshop described orientation for the mentors. The paper reports that data were collected from the mentors during the orientation session. It does not appear the satisfaction of mentees was collected at the end of the pilot project. Also inconsistent terms were used, eg., facilitators, mentors, participants and I found it difficult to know who was being referenced.

I recommend that mentoring as a concept and types of mentoring described in the literature, and the outcome of different types, be reported in the literature review. As well, the paper would benefit from a larger discussion about gender breakdown in medical school graduates, faculty positions, achieving the rank of full professor, and leadership roles. Changes over time would provide context. As well, are there issues specific to female faculty that limit their academic progression, e.g., less interest, competing family demands).

What other efforts were included in the multi-pronged approach to address gender disparity in academic progression at your institution? How might these have impacted or confounded your results?

The methods section could benefit from more depth of description about the process (some of this is provided in the discussion, but should be in methods). For example, how the female faculty were invited, how often meetings were held. The specific outcome measure was manuscript development yet other outputs were reported included grants, a conference presentation, and two enrolled advanced degrees (wasn’t one participant enrolled at the outset?). I found the
description of the number of women confusing and had to read this section several times: 17 vs 19 as reported in the abstract. Later, in results 23 participants was stated. While I understand the different numbers, it is distracting. Then later in the paragraph, 2 other individuals added to one group, one of whom is not a physician and, I would contend, should not be included in the results.

The results section could explore whether the frequency of group meetings or any other differences in groups impacted on manuscript production. A p value reported in paragraph 5 of results is not significant (p=0.49) but the text indicates a change in skill in this area. An important finding that is not in the discussion is the non-significant change in item #14: I have identified an effective academic mentor. What does this mean to the success of this program? This also seems to be contradicted by #15: I know how to find a good mentor. How to explain this finding?

There are a couple of places where references are needed.

Despite these comments, the results of this pilot project are significant and should be reported. With added detail and clarity, this paper will make a contribution to the 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 I have no competing interests.