Reviewer's report

Title: Comparison of communication skills between medical students admitted after interviews or on academic merits/SAT - less underperforming among those admitted after interviews

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Reviewer: Wolfgang Hampe

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This paper describes the performance of students admitted by interview or academic merits in one OSCE station with a simulated patient in the 8th semester. In the group of students admitted by interview were fewer underperformers.

The assessment of communication skills in only one OSCE station is problematic, but still laborious.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1) It is not clear, when the tested students were admitted and how many students dropped out of university until study year 4. The authors state this limitation and a possible selection bias in the discussion. Data on the number of students admitted in each admission group in 2004 and on the number of academic years of the tested students should be given.

2) The structure of the "semi-structured" interviews is not clear. Were the interviewers guided how to assess the stated attributes? More detailed information would allow other universities to compare the results with their own interviews.

3) The effect of the interview on the prediction of underperformance is significant but small, similar to the effect of gender. It is not clear why the authors chose a limit of <10 points for underperformance. Are the results also significant for cut offs of 9 or 11 points?

4) Did the raters know the admission group of all or some of the tested students during rating?

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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