Author's response to reviews

Title: Computer Supported Collaborative Learning in clerkship: An exploratory study of task-focussed discussion activity on a self-selected clinical problem

Authors:

Willem JM Koops (W.Koops@student.maastrichtuniversity.nl)
Cees PM Van der Vleuten (c.vandervleuten@maastrichtuniversity.nl)
Bas A De Leng (b.deleng@maastrichtuniversity.nl)
Luc HEH Snoeckx (l.snoeckx@gmail.com)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Mr. Aldrin Ulep,

I would like to thank you and the two referees for the comments on my manuscript (no. 1928331671672981).

According to these comments, I have made several adjustments in the article, and added new text as well, when a more clear explanation was needed. All adjusted and added text in the research article is hatched in yellow.

According to the required changes described by Mr. Aldrin Ulep:

Abstract:
- In the abstract I added a sentence concerning the independent rating of the students postings.

Methods section (statistics):
First, we reconsidered our data and the tests we used in this research. Because our data was non-normal, we calculated median (min.-max.).

Second, by a Mann-Whitney U test for independent samples we compared the analysis units of the revised papers with the unrevised papers on the three collaborative problem solving activities and their corresponding categories, and on the three critical appraisal topics and their elements.

Third, CAT task elements under discussion belonging to either the revised or unrevised papers were compared by a Chi-square test.

Papers format: The format of the manuscript is adjusted according to the journal style.

Comments of referee 1:
The discussion section of the research article was adjusted on:
- the influence of students’ motivation and paper quality is described.
- suggestions for further research by a controlled study is described.
At this moment, the author is writing a research proposal in order to measure students motivation within two different (controlled and autonomy supported) CSCL environments.
Comments of referee 2:

General comments:

The discussion paragraph was adjusted according to the following text.

- Although there is no significant evidence, we presume that the students self-chosen clinical problem contribute to this effective intervention. Such a student problem was an actual learning question which a student approached within his/her clinical learning environment.

- Students’ motivation could be an important variable influencing students to revise their paper, as well as the quality of students’ paper. In another research (although not yet published) we graded students revised papers, and compared these grades with pre-grades as well as with unrevised paper grades.

- In the discussion section of present article, the experience of students writing a CAT paper is more emphasized.

- Students perceptions on this CSCL task were measured in another research and described in a published article in Medical Teacher: Koops W, Van der Vleuten C, De Leng B, Oei S, Snoeckx L. Computer-supported collaborative learning in the medical workplace: Students’ experiences on formative peer feedback of a critical appraisal of a topic paper. Medical Teacher 2011, 33(6):e318-323

  Results: Students perceived knowledge improvement of their papers. The discussions were mostly task-focused. The students considered an instruction session and a manual necessary to prepare for CSCL. A high amount of sent messages and a high activity in discussion seems to influence scores on perceptions: ‘participation’ and ‘knowledge gain’ positively.

The title:

- The title is adjusted according to the referee’s proposal. To our opinion, the title is expressing the content of the article more clearly.

The abstract:

- The sentences “a more intense discussion…..” “Moreover…” in the introduction section are revised, expressing students’ perceptions and students’ activity more clearly.

- Results section: all expressions of critical appraisal topics are named the same in all tables, and written critical appraisal topics is marked by quotation marks.

- Conclusion: The research question is described in the conclusion section in order to connect the research question with the results.

I hope that these adjustments will positively influences the decision to accept this research article for publication.