Reviewer's report

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

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Reviewer: Nora Celebi

Reviewer's report:

The authors present an interesting study investigating the association between discussion activity using a computer supported collaborative learning environment and the revision of critically appraisal of a topic.

For papers that were revised later there was more discussion, task related as well as social discussion.

Since the discussions were blinded it was unclear whether the discussion was mainly by the author of whether the author was stimulated by the participants comments. So there can be a selection bias: more motivated authors of CAT-papers discuss more and are more likely to revise their paper. It would be interesting, whether CAT-papers which were revised later were longer in the beginning or differed in their quality in comparison to papers which were not revised. Or whether the topics were different. One would assume that papers on specialist topics would elicit less discussion.

It would be interesting to perform a controlled study with a manipulated discussion (either intense or limited) on CAT-papers in order to investigate a causal effect.

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