Reviewer's report

Title: A model of the pre-assessment learning effects of assessment is operational in an undergraduate clinical context

Version: 3 Date: 23 November 2011

Reviewer: Kalman Winston

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Discretionary Revisions
1. In paragraph 3 of the background (p.4), you state, “A validated model explaining (rather than describing) how assessment influences learning could benefit...”. And yet, I feel that you end up merely describing rather than explaining. Perhaps this comes from my own position of having heard all this before, from the many students I've worked with, to the point where your 'model' just seems completely obvious to me. You give a good, detailed description of how this appears in a clinical context, but no explanation of why this is so. It feels like a descriptive model, rather than an explanatory model. Have you really explained why all these assessment factors impact learning? Why, for example, does imminence affect effort? Why do different consequences prompt differing distribution of learning? Etc etc. However, maybe that’s just me, and other reviewers, or people who are newer to this subject area, would perceive it differently. Have others responded differently?

2. In paragraph 3, page 10, under recruitment of subjects, you state, “The remaining volunteers were thanked but not interviewed. ” I wonder if you could have gone on to interview those students in your attempts to validate your theory. At least then you would have been able to claim the validation was done with different subjects than the derivation.

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.