Reviewer's report

**Title:** Evaluation of the acceptability of Peer Physical Examination (PPE) in medical and osteopathic students: an inter-professional cross sectional survey

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 26 March 2013

**Reviewer:** Andy Wearn

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- **Major Compulsory Revisions**

1. The title is misleading – there is a comparison between health professional student groups. There was not an inter-professional in the sense that the term is typically used.

2. Abstract - the second half of the conclusions are outside the scope of the study. There is no empirical evidence presented to support the statements.

3. In the background and the conclusions, the authors discuss IPE and use the current study as an example of this. However, there does not appear to have been any IPE – there has been collaboration for the study between two institutions (and different professional groups), but there has been no contact between the students. If there was, it is not clear in the text. I would suggest removing all reference to IPE.

4. The hypothesis (that Osteopathy students enter with a more positive attitude) needs to be supported in the background section (the relevant literature is cited for the first time in the discussion). i.e. The discussion of ‘body work’ in the discussion section needs to be moved into the Background section.

5. The rationale for designing a new survey tool needs to be more clearly stated. The items in the new questionnaire seem to align strongly with the qualitative findings from studies using the EFS. What does the new tool add?

6. In the background, the authors should cite the wider literature for PPE with medical students (cited more widely in the discussion)

7. One of the key features of the study was the testing of a new tool – this needs to be mentioned in the objectives.

8. Methods - the survey was administered “just after the students’ first experience of PPE”. This requires additional explanation. When exactly were they sampled? - straight after a session, after they had done one session, after a semester, etc.

9. How was the survey administered? Paper, online? In class, out of class?

10. You need to acknowledge that previous papers using the EFS do report broader constructs through the analysis of the open text comments.
11. Results section requires expansion and sign-posting: What was the response rate? – if 100%, then state this. At each stage, make it clear which tool is being reported on, the new one or the EFS (using sub-headings would be one approach).

12. Results – although there was little sex difference for Osteo students seen in the new tool, table 4 shows that there was a significant sex difference using EFS (FT Osteo). The reporting and later discussion is therefore not entirely true to the data (it is stated that there is “no difference of gender for osteopathic students”). The authors could speculate on the difference seen in the two tools.

13. Discussion – the opening assertion needs to have been explained (see 5).

14. Results – table 2 – several factors load equally across two factors. This should be discussed.

15. References are required to support the sentence about previous CAM literature.

16. The discussion of socialisation should be more clearly placed in the context. These were early stage students, so it is surprising that they would have already taken on the markers of their profession.

17. Age – in the discussion you state that all groups were similar in age, but the osteo students were older (higher mean and larger SD)

18. Collaboration/IPE – the conclusions seem to indicate that there was collaboration, discussion and co-learning beyond the collection of data. However, this is not supported by evidence in the manuscript.

19. Career choice – the authors raise a new and interesting comment at the end of the conclusions section. To what degree is it expected that some students will be less engaged with examination at the start of their programme? They will all arrive with a lay world view. The cited paper in the context of PPE with nursing students clearly shows that early reservations largely disappear by the end of the programme.

20. The authors need to consider whether the global nature of their questions is comparable with the focussed body area structure of the EFS.

- Minor Essential Revisions

1. Abstract – the presented results are rather jumbled, they do not tell a clear story.

2. Next manuscript draft - It would be helpful to ask a native English speaker to proofread the manuscript; this would pick up any odd usage as well as vocabulary problems.

3. Table 1 comment needs to move to Results section

4. The validity testing data needs to move into the results section

5. Table 3 – note 4 is missing

6. Limitations could be dealt with more fully
7. References – there needs to be a return between Chen and Consorti.

- Discretionary Revisions

None.

**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:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests' .

(although my work is cited by the authors).