Reviewer’s report

Title: Objective structured assessment of technical competence in transthoracic echocardiography: a validity study in a standardised setting

Version: 2 Date: 19 January 2013

Reviewer: Jennifer Mary Weller

Reviewer’s report:

Comments to the author
This now reads well, and it’s much clearer what this adds to the existing knowledge in the subject area. There are now just a few minor revisions required to bring the quality of the manuscript up to publishable standard.

Minor Essential Revisions

The overall standard of writing is good, and the article is well structured but there are quite a few minor problems with the written English involving punctuation and grammar, changes in tense, and a few typos which detract from the quality of the manuscript. I have made some suggestions in track changes in the attached file of the main manuscript. There are also a few errors in the Appendix (PARATERNAL – assume this should be parasternal; TAPSE – is this a typo? I don’t know what it means; SUBCOSTALT – assume subcostal).

Re sample size, please can this be stated in the methods rather than waiting for the section on limitations?

Specific comments

Abstract
The abstract doesn’t mention the pilot study. As this is described in detail in the paper, please mention this briefly in the abstract.

Page 9. Please spell out all abbreviations when first used (PW, CW) (also in appendix)

Page 9. The use of the word anonymous is not always correct. The images were de-identified, rather than anonymous. Page 9 in the section “grading of test results” the first sentence needs to be rephrased as it reads as if the rater was anonymous not the examination. Suggest “ (OG) rated all 45 de-identified examinations in random order…”

Page 10. In reference to the size sample size of the pilot study, please remove the sentence “We did not find it appropriate to ask patients to be scanned 45 times”. There would be many other ways of doing a study of patients with pathologies than asking one patient to be scanned 45 times. The next sentence states that nine new physicians were recruited “based on sample size calculations”. This is confusing as these calculations are not provided, and the authors have argued that a sample size calculation was not possible for the main study. Please clarify if this was based on the results of the first study or
something else.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**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'