Author's response to reviews

Title: An electronic portfolio for quantitative assessment of surgical skills in undergraduate medical education

Authors:

Serafin Sanchez Gomez (sanchezsg@ono.com)
Jose Maria Ortega Bevia (jomaria@us.es)
Elisa Maria Cabot Ostos (emcabot@us.es)
Juan Manuel Maza Solano (jua.maza.solano@gmail.com)
Tomas Francisco Herrero Salado (tomasherrrero@gmail.com)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
To the Editor of BMC Medical Education

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Dear Editor:

The authors are deeply grateful to the comments issued by the editor and reviewers. Thanks to them we could realize several mistakes made in drafting the manuscript and how to express the content of the article.

We tried to reduce the ambiguity of purpose and focus on its most important: the use of autonomous self-assessment portfolio for students and their ability to guide their learning. To do this we have edited the manuscript extensively and even changed the title of the article. The text has been reviewed by a professional translator of English language.

We stressed the innovation of the portfolio compared to standard training portfolio by providing a feedback that quantifies the activities proposed for students to complete practical purposes. We have found that their most important contribution is not a technical advance in itself, but technically the computer application allows the quantification and provides automatic feedback in figures and percentage of learning.

The rating of the students is performed at the University of Seville by examinations at the end of the course, so the use of the portfolio was raised as a volunteer for both students and teachers. We may have misspoken involvement of teachers in the use of the portfolio, as there was opposition, but only less willingness among some of them in this aspect of voluntariness. We have also tried to highlight the ability of the portfolio that are providing the students themselves to encourage their clinical teachers in the teaching of practical objectives carried out by themselves and circumvent the simple observation during practical classes, in order to conducive to effective learning by doing.

We have amended the Introduction to the differences presented by the electronic portfolio about common experiences known. In the Introduction we have eliminated the paragraphs that get confusion here. We have also improved the use of the concepts of competence, skills, abilities and goals.

We have tried to clarify that the innovation of the electronic portfolio means that it includes a numerical quantification of student achievement on all its practical purposes. This innovation coexists with formative assessment that teachers exert on the reflections of the students, but now this evaluation can be performed non-simultaneously to self-evaluation of the student.

The authors express explicit responsibility and acceptance for the contents of this article. Serafín Sánchez Gómez participated actively in conception and design of project. Drafting was conducted by Serafín Sánchez Gómez, Tomás Francisco Herrero Salado and Juan Manuel Maza Solano. All authors and coauthors worked in analysis of the manuscript data, in critically revision the content of the manuscript, and have given their final approval of the version to be published if it is accepted.

Yours sincerely,

Corresponding author: Prof. Dr. Serafín Sánchez Gómez