Reviewer's report

**Title:** History-taking and empathetic communication - two sides of the same coin?

**Version:** 2 **Date:** 25 March 2013

**Reviewer:** John Frain

**Reviewer's report:**

The authors appear to have considered and responded to the initial comments and suggestions made at first review. As a result they have produced a paper the conclusions of which not all readers will necessarily agree but will be of interest to those working in this field. There is now a much more comprehensive overview of existing literature with an appropriate selection of references. The study is placed in the context of what happens in the authors' own institution. The methods section is very clear and could be repeated fairly easily. Important quality markers of the method such as deciding on outcomes to be measured and blinding are now clearly stated. The discussion now covers the connection between teaching the content and communication skills - a dilemma with which all teachers in the field have to contend. The discussion section and conclusions now give the paper an outlook which is more international in feel and therefore likely to make the work of more interest outside its original setting. It is now considerably improved and I would look forward to reading it.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**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