Reviewer's report

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

**Version:** 2  **Date:** 27 March 2013

**Reviewer:** Anne M Cushing

**Reviewer's report:**

This is a re-review of the article and I am happy to recommend its publication with a requirement to make one revision.

The authors have very satisfactorily addressed the issues raised by reviewers with one exception which I would still like them to amend.

This relates to their interpretation in the discussion that 56% of 123 items of information gathered is alarming.

In their letter of response to the reviewers they say it 'seems very low' which is a more appropriate phrase. In particular they say in their letter, but not in the article, that the students diagnoses were accurate so it does raise the question as to what % of items of information the authors would consider acceptable.

One of the other reviewers also points out that clinical reasoning does not require all information. The authors say that these items were generated by an expert panel however it is worth noting that research has shown (Rethans) that experts, when it comes to their own practice do not actually complete all the items that they define as important.

Whilst the authors have not shown that students who are more empathic gain more information, they have also shown that they do not gain any less information.

I would suggest it is important therefore to make this point otherwise the results could be misquoted.

The paper reads very well and will be of interest to readers.

Thank you for letting me review it.

**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 I have no competing interests