Reviewer’s report

Title: Patient and preceptor attitudes towards teaching medical students in General Practice.

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Reviewer: Michael MY Yelland

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Review of article for BMC Medical Education:

Patient and preceptor attitudes towards teaching medical students in General Practice.

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Key:
1 = major compulsory revision
2 = minor essential revision
3 = discretionary revision

Response to Points Requested by BMC

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
Yes, but it seems to be missing an element about comparing attitudes of patients before and after consultations. Was this an aim of the study? If not, what was the reason for having WR and AC questionnaires?1

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
Generally yes, but there are some aspects that need attention.
• It is stated that no assessment of validity of the questionnaires was done. To this could be added that no formal assessment of test-retest reliability of the questionnaire was done.3
• The statement on page 4 in the methods that ‘The number of patients who consulted during the study period was recorded.’ This leads the reader to expect a patient response rate to involvement in the study, but this is not forthcoming in the results. It is only in the discussion that it is stated that this response rate could not be calculated.2
• Once again, the authors need to be more explicit about the rationale for having the WR and AC groups. They should also be clear about why these groups were sampled at different times.1
• There needs to be a statement about whether patient consent for student presence in consultations is generally obtained in Austrian GP setting to inform
the results and discussion about patient feelings about confidentiality.

- There is a need to make it more clear whether the 28 practices in which patient data were collected were run by a subgroup of the 74 GPs who were approached for the study. Was there any systematic sampling of the 74 practices to get these 28 practices or did it just depend on which practices agreed to take part?

3. Are the data sound?
   - GP data with a response rate of 80% are probably sound.
   - In the absence of response rates for patients, the patient data are less sound, but this is discussed in the discussion section.
   - Patient data are more prone to bias as there is no indication of the response rate.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
   Yes

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
   The discussion commences with the key messages of the study that were consistent with the data presented. Several matters need attention in the discussion:
   - The first sentence on page 8 is ambiguous. Does it describe three separate or related feelings? Should it become ‘Doctors (Table 1) felt positively challenged as role models, almost never felt disturbed and were positively motivated by a student #s presence.’
   - Please clarify the meaning of ‘personal’ and ‘procedural’ aspects of teaching in lines 9-11 on page 8.
   - In the last two lines of page 8 caution should be exercised about drawing this conclusion based on samples of different patients taken at completely different times.
   - On page 10, it is unclear if preceptors were paid for their involvement in the study or whether payment was contingent on having students or involvement in other activities of the Department of General Practice.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
   Generally yes, but additional discussion about the possible disconnect between the WR and AC groups is needed.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
   Yes, mention of several previous studies is made.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
   Yes, with one minor exception below.
9. Is the writing acceptable?
There are several areas where more conventional English usage could be made:

- Methods section of abstract. The following wording is suggested:
  - Seventy-four GP-preceptors were invited to answer an online survey. Patients attending consultations with a medical student present completed questionnaires either before the consultation (WR group) or immediately after consultation (AC group).
- Pg 4, line 2 – ‘single handed’ could be replaced by ‘solo practitioners’
- Pg 4, paragraph on questionnaires – this would work better if the description of the patient questionnaires and the GP questionnaires were dealt with in two separate paragraphs. It needs to be more clear that the WR and AC questionnaires had the same questions about patient use of the practice and the interaction with medical students at the practice and that the questions about their attitudes to students were the similar with appropriate modifications to the tenses of verbs to fit reflect the timing of the questionnaire.
- Pg 5, lines 13 and 14 – the word ‘stage’ would be preferable to the word ‘arm’ in describing the different data collection periods.
- Pg 7, line 2 – here the word ‘arm’ should be replaced by the word ‘group’
- Pg 7, line 2 – need to define ‘older age’
- Pg 7, line 13 – ‘up to 10 years or over’ is more clearly described as ‘up to 10 years or over 10 years’.

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 I have no competing interests.