Reviewer's report

Title: Debriefing and video-based feedback of oral clinical presentations reduce anxiety in medical students of ICU: a multicentre, prospective, randomised study

Version: 1 Date: 31 January 2014

Reviewer: Jochanan Benbassat

Reviewer's report:

You present the results of a study that randomized medical students attending a clinical clerkship into those who received a video based feedback and those who did not. The dependent variable was the reduction in the scores on state-anxiety validated questionnaire. You found that both groups had significantly lower scores after 3 months of internship. However, this reduction was more pronounced in the video-based feedback group than in controls.

Major Comments

1. Abstract: Please specify who the participants were already in the Methods section, rather than in the section of the results.

2. Abstract and Introduction, first paragraph: It would appear to me that the main strength of the study is that it describes a method for reducing medical students’ state anxiety. I do not think that it aims at improving mastering oral presentations. Therefore I recommend deleting the issue of the quality of the oral presentations both from the introduction and from the discussion.

3. Introduction, second paragraph: Although the study uses video based feedback, it is not intended to explore its value in teaching clinical skills in general. You may wish to emphasize that while there is undisputed evidence supporting the efficacy of video based feedback in teaching clinical skills, you know of no previous attempts to explore its specific value in reducing students’ state anxiety.

4. Introduction, last paragraph: What were the eligible students told about the aims of the study before they gave their informed consent?

5. Study population: Please describe the study population in terms of inclusion criteria, exclusion criteria, number of eligible students who refused to participate and number of participants with missing data, and to consider deleting figure 1.

6. How long after the oral presentations was the feedback provided?

Minor comments

1. The paper is generally well presented. Still I would recommend re-editing.

2. I for one had difficulties with your use of the terms “feedback” and “debriefing” interchangeably. Unless I am mistaken, the term feedback refers to a
constructive criticism by an observer of a student’s performance. The term debriefing refers to eliciting a student’s report about his/her learning experience. Please recheck if I am right and correct if needed.

3. I feel uncomfortable with your use of expressions such as “the number of students with high-level anxiety was strongly lower in the video-based feedback group” (Abstract, results); “Video-based feedback is now used widely in medicine, with good results” (introduction second paragraph); ”our study was not designed to demonstrate a specific benefit between a video-taped presentation and a formal oral presentation” (discussion last paragraph).

4. In my opinion, your study has no methodological limitations. Those that you state in the discussion (failure to address trait anxiety, effect on quality of presentations, and performing the debriefing in a non-standardized way) are clearly beyond the declared scope of the study and I recommend to you to reconsider including them into your paper

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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