Author's response to reviews

Title: Using focus groups to understand causes for morale decline after introducing change in an IM residency program:

Authors:

Lloyd Rucker (lrucker@uci.edu)
Johanna Shapiro (jfshapir@uci.edu)
Cliff Fornwalt (hfonwal@uci.edu)
Keenu Hundal (keunu.hundal@gmail.com)
Swapna B Reddy (swapnabreddy@gmail.com)
Zarema Singson (zaremasingson@gmail.com)
Khanh T Trieu (kttrieu@hotmail.com)

Version: 4 Date: 15 June 2014

Author's response to reviews: see over
June 16, 2014

Dear BMC Editors:

Thank you for the opportunity to make final revisions on our submission MS: 7786846511673994, “Using focus groups to understand causes for morale decline after introducing change in an IM residency program.” The guidance provided was extremely helpful in making the following changes:

1. Ethics
   Please add the full name and affiliation of the ethics committee that approved the study to the Methods section. This information was actually included in the previous submission, I have now highlighted the material to make sure reviewers can find it (p. 6, para 2).

2. Consent
   Please add a formal consent to participate statement to the manuscript, explicitly stating whether consent was written or verbal. We have now provided more detailed information about the consent process (because this study was categorized as exempt, only verbal consent was required). This is included in the track-change additions p. 6, para 2, lines 4-5, 11-12.

3. RATS guidelines for qualitative research
   In accordance with BioMed Central editorial policies (http://www.biomedcentral.com/about/editorialpolicies#StandardsofReporting), could you please ensure that your study adheres to the RATS guidelines for reporting qualitative studies (http://www.biomedcentral.com/authors/rats), and add a statement to that effect in the Methods section. The RATS criteria for qualitative research were reviewed; and we have now added a paragraph p. 6-7, para 3 specifying the ways in which our study adheres to the guidelines.

4. Please use initials in Authors Contributions, in accordance with our guidelines. Full names have been replaced with initials, in conformity with journal guidelines.

5. All other information should be put in a separate section. Other author information is now included in a separate section with this heading.

6. Please also ensure that your revised manuscript conforms to the journal style (http://www.biomedcentral.com/info/ifora/medicine_journals). We have again reviewed the journal style guidelines and to the best of our ability have ensured that the article is formatted correctly.

7. In addition, the following minor changes have been made:
   a. Two references have been added (#s 12,14). Ref 12 was added because the RATS criteria raises questions about the use of focus groups to explore sensitive topics; and this citation justifies the use of focus groups under these conditions. Narrative has been added making this point p. 4, lines 1-3. Ref 14 was added because it establishes that certain modifications may reasonably be made in focus group methodology when “small communities” such as a residency program are involved. Narrative has been added making this point p. 4, para 3, and p.5 lines 2-4.
   b. In order to make the changes required, it was necessary to slightly expand the article. The word count and number of pages have been adjusted accordingly.
   c. Acknowledgements have now be placed in the proper order in the manuscript.
   d. Minor stylistic revisions in the manuscript have been made.

To facilitate processing, I have included a track-change version in which all revisions are easily identified; and a clean version.
Thank you again for your assistance with this manuscript.

Regards,

Johanna Shapiro, Ph.D.
Professor, Department of Family Medicine
University of California Irvine School of Medicine