Reviewer's report

Title: Beyond Bricks and Mortar: A Rural Network Approach to Preclinical Medical Education

Version: 1 Date: 21 May 2014

Reviewer: Suzanne McKenzie

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions: Nil
Minor Essential Revisions:
1. Abstract results section (line 47) states that the small group learning environment provided comparative academic support however this is not evident in the results provided in the body of the manuscript.
2. Methods section (line 153): how was the qualitative feedback collected and what was the method of analysis; what are the limitations of whatever method you used?
3. Discussion: (lines 228-233; and 255-258): you state that local resources (patients and preceptors) may be an important limiting factor in implementing your model which I agree with. However why would rural communities agree to deliver this curriculum? - what benefits do they get in return, is there any capacity building for the community (preceptors, patients, local services etc). It seems from your discussion that it is all about what these communities can provide for your students and not what you can provide for the communities aside from the hope that some of the students may choose a rural based career in the future. Some reference to how your findings could be interpreted in light of the literature about social accountability and community engagement would strengthen your discussion.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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 that I have no competing interests