Author's response to reviews

Title: Fitness-to-practice concerns in rural undergraduate medical education: a qualitative study

Authors:

Pamela C Snow Dr (pamela.snow@monash.edu)
Pamela J Harvey Ms (pam.harvey@monash.edu)
Kylie L Cocking Ms (kylie.cocking@monash.edu)

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Reply to reviewers’ comments

Title: Fitness-to-practice concerns in rural undergraduate medical education: a qualitative study

Dear Editor,

Thank you to the two reviewers of our article for their thoughtful and constructive comments. We have considered their comments and have made revisions as outlined below (and in red in the full text of the article).

Reviewer: Kathleen Brooks

- Include a limitations section:
  This has been done and addresses comments from both reviewers on the size of the study group, its Australian setting and relationship to the authors, and probable bias in the nature of the sample.

- FTP model to evaluate student behaviour or health professional behaviour:
  The following text has been inserted on p. 16 to acknowledge this point:
  
  Although this study was designed to better understand student needs and behaviour, there was some “blurring” of discussion topics in the interviews with students, with a number of student informants identifying behaviours of concern in some of the clinicians under whom they worked. The “mixed messages” this creates, and how students resolve such ambiguities should be a focus of future studies.

Reviewer: Janet Yates

- Explanation of author jobs within the medical school hierarchy and effect on recruitment:
Author relationship to students is now in the ‘competing interests’ section of the article.

- **Student participation invitation, anonymisation of student data and more information about interview process:**

  The methodology section has been altered to reflect these concerns. We note that it is not possible in this kind of research for participants to be anonymous, however they were assured that their data would be de-identified and their privacy would be protected.

- **Removal of interviewee initials:**

  Done.

- **More discussion on ‘…they already have an intern job’**

  We agree that this comment may be quite important, but are not able to comment on the extent to which it reflects a lack of understanding on the part of students that professionalism extends beyond the workplace, so have made no amendments to the MS.

- **On the issue of lack of familiarity with AHPRA regulation, the following text has been added on p. 16:**

  There is also a suggestion in the data that students and practitioners are unfamiliar with the AHPRA regulations pertaining to mandatory reporting, and this should also be investigated further.

- **Expanded discussion re mental health issues affecting FTP issues and staff comments on poor student behaviour.**

  A small addition to the discussion section addresses this issue:
Prevailing attitudes such as these create a difficult environment for student help-seeking behaviour, even though recent studies have shown that mental health issues affect undergraduate medical student progress.

We trust we have adequately addressed the reviewers’ feedback and look forward to hearing back from you in due course.

Regards,

Pamela Harvey
Corresponding author
Monash University
School of Rural Health
Bendigo
Victoria 3552
Australia
pam.harvey@monash.edu

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