Author's response to reviews

Title: Mind-Body Skills Groups for Medical Students

Authors:

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Author's response to reviews: see over
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Office of Dr James S. Gordon
2934 Macomb St. NW
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BioMed Central Editorial Office
RE: Mandatory Revisions to Manuscript
MS: 1648571698116856
Mind-Body Skills Groups for Medical Students

Dear Editorial Office,

As you have requested, I have made the revisions as directed by the first reviewer. This letter provides point-by-point detail of how these points have been addressed. These changes have all been incorporated in the revised manuscript.

Very interesting topic and a relevant topic for medical education. However, I believe that there needs to be more clarity as to the type of paper this is so that it can be reviewed accordingly and appropriately. Substantive changes have been made to make sure this paper meets the specific criteria of the “debates” category. Revisions present a clear argument—in this case that medical schools can do more to reduce student stress through mind-body medicine and specifically mind-body skills groups.

It is categorized as a debate, yet there are elements within the paper that this was actually a research project/survey. The elements to which the reviewer refers is the interview/survey section. Revisions clearly indicate that this section is designed to provide the evidence on which the argument is based. Revisions now clearly tie this section to the initial argument.

Is this meant to be a program description of what the medical schools are doing, a critical appraisal of the different programs identified, or is it meant to be a research project using a survey as the primary methodology for program evaluation of those schools who had attended the MBSG Faculty Development and then went on to implement this training at their home schools? Revisions add clarity to ensure that it is identified as a debate, presenting the evidence for the importance and usefulness of the MBSG approach, and not as a research project or program overview.

It is written with Methods, Results and Discussion (though there is an ”extra” discussion session during the Background which introduces the MBSG training program as well). The sections conform to the style outline for “debate” papers. The “extra” discussion section was removed.
This would lead one to think it was a research project and if so, issues such as ethics approval and method of data analysis would need to be described in the manuscript. Ethics approval was not necessary as interviews described did not fit the criteria for human protections; rather, the interviews allowed experienced medical educators to contribute substantively to the debate.

The last part of the "results" section, which summarizes what is done at all but 2 schools, contains thematic analysis of benefits and challenges, but this is not clear in the methodology if this was the intent and if so, how it was designed. Language has been added to clarify the intent of the thematic analysis of benefits and challenges and means of design.

If it is meant to be a debate, then I think the organization of the paper may need to be reworked to be framed as an argument with reasoning. As written, I feel that it is somewhere in between, but unclear as to what the intended goal of the paper was to be written as. The organization of the paper has been significantly reworked to make clear the intentions and to allow the paper to fit unambiguously within the debate category.

Thank you for your attention and for the reviewers’ helpful suggestions. Attached is the revised manuscript. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 202.537.6837.

Sincerely,

James S. Gordon, MD
Clinical Professor of Psychiatry and Family Medicine, Georgetown University
Founder and Director, The Center for Mind-Body Medicine