Reviewer's report

Title: Simulated Patients' ratings of empathy in medical student final year clinical examination. Are they useful?

Version: 2 Date: 13 May 2014

Reviewer: Christopher Huntley

Reviewer's report:

Minor Essential Revisions

I felt the research question was interesting and the study added to the field. The design matched the research question. Interpretation of the results was reasonable and a fair and balanced discussion was made.

Some minor essential revisions are needed to make this a clearer and more readable paper for the audience (see below).

Referencing:
Needs to change to match house style.

Statistical Revisions:
Report correlations to 2 d.p.
For Spearman's Rho use r with a subscript s - the convention and readers can then see at a glance the test used.
More information is needed on the type of ICC was used (e.g. consistency vs. absolute agreement? Average measures?) . This is quite important as estimates can vary widely depending on what is used. You will also need to justify the choice. (I would recommend the excellent book by Streiner and Norman 2008 for more on reliability/ICCs and the convention reporting them).
Could you also report the SD for the empathy scores.

Figures:
Not all figures are titled (only Figure 1). Axes titles also need to be more clearly labelled.
Also in the text a figure 4 is referred to instead of figure 3.

Other:
self reported should be hyphenated (self-reported)

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
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