Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 2 Date: 24 May 2014

Reviewer: Joao J Cerqueira

Reviewer’s report:

The paper focuses on an important topic, is well conceived and done and has the potential to impact our practice.

Major compulsory revisions
1. Given the potential impact of the paper, I think the discussion should be improved. I feel that the authors should explore the way empathy scales/scores could be used in assessment and feedback, and the pros and cons of such options.
2. I did not understand the paragraph starting in line 199. Could the authors provide more details on how students are selected to return the next day?
3. Please explain what kind of ICC was used.
4. Please explain whether OSCE stations use the same grade descriptors as OSLERS or detail them, if possible.

Minor essential revisions
1. Please provide the n of subjects for each comparison / correlation.
2. Line 29: suggesting instead of suggests
3. Line 51: assessed as part instead of a part
4. Line 240: please provide de p value of the correlation with the outlier student.
5. Figure 4 should be figure 3
6. Change the x-axis title of figure 4 (now fig 3) to OSLER_PP or something similar for consistency. What does FCPE score mean?

Discretionary revisions
None.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests