Reviewer’s report

Title: How satisfied are students with peer teaching in clinical communication skills?

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Reviewer: Louise Arnold

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REVIEWER’S REPORT

This manuscript describes a very modest study exploring the question of student satisfaction with instruction about communication skills offered by three types of teachers including clinicians and near-peers. The comparison of satisfaction among students by teacher type rested upon data derived from a survey administered to one cohort of students from one school after one teaching session. Students expressed satisfaction with their instruction across all three teacher types.

The authors clearly defined the question for study. The survey they administered was brief but of unknown reliability and validity which compromises the soundness of the data obtained. The study design involving just one cohort in one school after only one teaching session further limits the soundness of the data and markedly detracts from its contribution to the literature on peer-teaching. The manuscript adheres to standard practice for reporting with an introduction, sections describing methods and results, and a discussion/conclusion. The table lays out the relevant data points, and inclusion of quotes from the comments that students wrote adds richness, albeit perhaps overdone since relatively few students answered the open-ended questions. The discussion ties the current work to extant literature, and implications of peer teaching are neatly summarized. The authors identified a few limitations of the work but neglected to mention some major gaps in their work such as failure to examine student satisfaction in several cohorts after exposure to different teacher types and instructional tasks in multiple sessions and in different schools. Their suggestion that future research could well study relationships between different teacher types and summative assessment of communication skills is well taken. The conclusion the authors reached is appropriate, given the results, and would be useful for the authors’ themselves although not substantive enough to add to the literature in a meaningful way. For the most part, the writing is acceptable; the abstract conveys what was found; and previous work in the area was cited.

1. Major Compulsory Revisions: I would like to see the comparison drawn among more students at different year levels after multiple exposures to teaching sessions involving not only communication but also other data gathering skills in several schools. In other words, the work needs to be redesigned to yield a more
substantial and substantive picture of student satisfaction with instruction that different teacher types provide.

2. Minor Essential Revisions: The introduction needs to clarify how the current study extends the literature. It isn’t until the end of the manuscript that the authors said the work is unique because clinicians were among the teacher types studied. And for this reader the distinction between faculty instructors and clinician instructors needs to be drawn, for in medical schools faculty instructors are often clinicians. The title needs to be rethought; it emphasizes near-peer teaching and yet the fact that clinicians were included among the teacher types in the comparison of student satisfaction makes the work unique, according to the authors themselves. In the discussion of student comments the assertion that many students found the session useful is not quite accurate, given the low number of overall comments received. The pie chart could easily be deleted.

3. Discretionary Revisions: None

**Level of interest:** An article of insufficient interest to warrant publication in a scientific/medical journal

**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.