Reviewer's report

Title: Critical Appraisal Skills of Family Physicians in Ontario, Canada

Version: 1 Date: 16 October 2003

Reviewer: Chris Del Mar

Reviewer's report:

General
This is a survey in which family physicians were sent an exam on EBM through the post. The main finding was a surprisingly good ability of the FPs to be able to initially appraise some of these data, especially younger and academics.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
The survey seems to have been well conducted. There is some confusion by how the sample was selected (how was this achieved randomly, and from what full denominator?). There is a comparison of the responders' (a disappointingly low 30%) with non-responders' demographic characteristics, and much of this is made in the Discussion. There is full discussion of the inadequacies of the methods, although the issue of validity could be further expanded, in particular people could take issue about the relative ease of achieving the “pass mark” between the different types of tasks – differences which are made much of in the Discussion.

Minor Compulsory Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
The paper feels very long for such a simply survey. It might be possible to collapse together some results Tables. Certainly the prose could be tightened.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
None

What next?: Accept after minor compulsory revisions

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

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
None