Reviewer’s report

Title: Experiences of using an interactive audience response system in lectures

Version: 1 Date: 9 October 2003

Reviewer: Henry Mandin

Reviewer’s report:

General

The authors report their experience with the use of "Interactive Presenter" in a pediatric course that utilizes lectures as a means of information transfer. This represents an innovative way to use an instrument that has been available for some time in a learning format where its use has remained uncommon. They report positive results in the attitudes and responses of students and faculty.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1. Since the authors are sufficiently impressed with the results of using 'voting' that they advocate its use, readers are likely to be interested in the relative cost of acquiring and operating the "Interactive Presenter". The authors should provide this information, if possible in relation to the cost of other learning strategies.

2. Despite positive responses to most of the questions, the students' attendance at these lectures remained unchanged. This absence of change in attendance deserves some discussion on the part of the authors.

3. The discussion mixes opinions and conclusions that had differing origins. Some of the conclusions discussed were clearly from the questions asked in the voting (e.g. 80% of students felt that lectures enhanced their learning). Other discussion points refer to the literature (e.g. misjudgement of the learners/context). Other discussion points were likely based on views that became obvious with usage, or reflect students’ or faculty's opinion after usage of the voting system (e.g. voting can be used for organising examinations).

I would suggest that these discussion points be grouped in a way that makes it clear to the readers which issues reflect findings from the questions, which from the voting in general, which from the literature, and which from faculty and students views.

4. Clearly not all lecturers elected to use the voting. The authors should discuss the reasons behind their refusal.

Minor Compulsory Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

1. Figure 6 is confusing in that it mixes options such as "totally disagree" to "fully agree" back to "disagree" back to "agree". As a reader, I had to carefully re-read the results more than once, and this sequence may well have confused the students when they were answering the question. Perhaps the figure could be
re-arranged in the manner of a scale to go from "totally disagree" to "disagree" to "agree" to "fully agree".

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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