Author's response to reviews

Title: Student responses to the introduction of case-based learning and practical activities into a theoretical Obstetrics and Gynaecology teaching programme.

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Dr. Herzig,

Firstly we would like to thank your valuable analysis of our work. The suggestions of both reviewers have been of high esteem and are being added to the work. We had sent answers about the first revision, but we understood that you have not received them. So in response to your question “what can be learnt by the (inter-)national readership”, we believe that our work clearly demonstrates the positive receptiveness of the students to an active methodology of apprenticeship. Our work has presented strong regional impact, bringing about discussions regarding active teaching methodologies and future changes in medical curriculum in our School, as well as in others that we have interchange. Our intention is to publish it in a periodical of international renown as BMC Medical Education. As it is part of a greater project of curriculum change, just as it is being done in several countries, it will be useful to the professionals involved by the subject.

In regards to the Major compulsory revisions matters:

1. Are there means to prove that the two cohorts of students are equivalent (i.e. sociodemographic data beyond age and gender, test achievement in previous courses, similar rating given to courses that did not undergo curricular change?

Answer: The two cohorts are equivalent because our school, since it is a private institution, demonstrates the same pattern of students including those part of two study groups: students from middle-high private school (85.5% x 81.5% on this study), Caucasian and family income higher than US$ 2,000.00 in its totality;

2. To what extent can the Authors rule out a Hawthorne effect (i.e. any change as such is perceived as positive)? One way would perhaps be to study a third cohort.

Answer: It was not the study design. To study a third cohort would invalidate the plan proposed to the study and it may be theme of another research;

3. No information is given to the objective consequences of curricular change on student learning (e.g. test results).

Answer: We only wished to evaluate the impact of the introduction of case discussions and other practical activities upon the students' perception of the
prepared to the internship location (year of 2004) than previous groups (opinion from the authors);

4. What are the key elements of curricular change that others should adopt to perform a similar study, and to hope for similar outcome?

Answer: The key elements of curricular change are active learning methods: practical activities parallel to theoretical programme (used in this study), real case-based learning (used in this study) and problem-based learning.

Once again we would like to thank your considerations and we hope to have improved the quality of the work.

Sincerely,

The Authors