Reviewer's report

Title: A randomized trial comparing digital and live lecture formats

Version: 2 Date: 2 November 2004

Reviewer: James L Wofford

Reviewer's report:

General

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

There is no discussion of the fact there was no difference in the main outcomes. The equivalence of the performance outcomes could be discussed as a success of the intervention. It is as important than the data on attitudes

A paragraph on the limitations of the studies (generalizability, internal validity, etc.) usually makes a manuscript more honest as it is the authors own acknowledgments of problems with the study.

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

Table 1 title says performance on a feedback examination – author may choose to remove term feedback, as this is confusing.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

A discussion of whether there are other studies of digital lectures versus live lectures would make a stronger paper.

Again, the fact that students thought that digital lectures could replace may say more about the quality of lectures, tradeoff of travel distance to the lecture site, or the lack of interest of students in the lecture format. The authors could comment on these possibilities in the discussion section.

My earlier reference to lag between video and audio was meant to make the author think about the true value of the video of the lecturer. Especially when there is a time delay between the video and the audio of the lecture, slight but distracting, is it really worth the extra hassles of providing video. Why not put a still picture of the lecturer? Do you really think that gestures or facial expression of the lecturer are important?

By my calculations, 96 total students - 40 ineligible = 56 eligible students, and 55.3 % (31 of the 56) eligible students participated . This sounds better than the ~33% cited by the authors.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

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