Reviewer's report

**Title:** Teaching statistics to medical students using problem-based learning: the Australian experience

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 24 September 2004

**Reviewer:** Judith Wylie

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)

1. The accessibility of the paper would be enhanced by the inclusion of a definition of PBL and some examples in the Background.
2. The author states that it seems likely that PBL will rapidly become more widely adopted in UK medical schools. Would it be possible to provide some evidence as to why this is likely to happen?
3. It is stated that experience around the world shows that it is difficult to teach EBM principles. Are there references which could support this statement?
4. The opening statement in the Discussion that “I was surprised and disappointed not to find anywhere in Australia…..” is very strong. Is there evidence to suggest that there would be a truly integrated approach to the teaching of statistics and research methods through PBL?

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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)

1. There is a lack of consistency in punctuation within bullets in the Results section.
2. There is reference to the “Introduction” in the Results section – should this be changed to the “Background”?
3. In the second paragraph of ‘A parallel course’ the following might be better: ‘In this approach a non-PBL course is given separately ….’
4. In the third paragraph of the Background, “Particular” should read as ‘Particularly’
5. In the third paragraph of ‘Material integrated but separately taught’, the punctuation after “coefficient, etc” needs to be amended.
6. In the fourth sentence of the fourth paragraph of the Discussion, “do” should be “so”.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1. Would it be possible to include some information on the questions asked during the interviews and in the emails? I appreciate that the interviews were open in nature but some further information would be helpful.
2. I am slightly uncomfortable with the personal nature of the comments regarding the author’s lack of problem in acting as a PBL tutor in subjects of which he knew virtually nothing, and again with the comment that “I have never found ignorance of the subject matter to be a problem”. Perhaps this could be replaced with “a lack of knowledge”? 

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

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

None