Reviewer's report

Title: Teaching cardiac auscultation to trainees in internal medicine and family practice: Does it work?

Version: 1  Date: 10 December 2003

Reviewer: Bernard M Karnath

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General

The article by Favrat and colleagues is an interesting one in that the study incorporates real patients with echocardiographically confirmed valvular disease. As they mention, most studies on cardiac auscultation use simulated sounds, most of which were published by Mangione and colleagues. The study is interesting despite its shortcomings and I would recommend publication if the authors can expand on the details noted below.

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

The tables and figures lack detail. I’m not clear on which murmurs and sounds were tested. The authors do mention AI and AS in the text. What about all of the other sounds and murmurs?

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

The article has some major weaknesses of concern: There is a lack of a control group. Although they mention 20 trainees at the beginning of their study, only 10 were able to participate in the intervention. Why weren’t the other 10 trainees used as a control? They did complete the pretest and should have also completed the posttest. This would have served as an excellent control (i.e. non-intervention group. The small number of participants is of concern.

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