Author's response to reviews

Title: A qualitative study of the perceptions and experiences of Pre-Registration House Officers on teamwork and support

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We are grateful to the referees for their helpful comments. We have made appropriate changes to the manuscript in the light of these comments. the discussion has been rewritten completely. Specific responses to the 3 referees are:

Reviewer 1

We have expanded the literature section. However, the findings do come from observation of the responses of the PRHOs and some of the findings were unexpected. They do not relate to a prior hypothesis but a development from a qualitative study, we have rewritten the discussion to set this in a clearer framework. The findings do suggest to us that elements of teamwork are related intimately to organisations and work patterns and that they need to be considered together.

We have included more detail in the methods section.

Referee 2

1. We have now made it clear that the information comes from wide areas of the interview responses but that there was one specific question to ensure that team work was covered adequately in every interview.

2. We do not agree with the criticism that the findings are out of date because of the introduction of foundation programmes and believe that the lessons are essential for the introduction of these programmes. It is likely that these will be introduced in various ways in different Trusts. Many are seeking to retain an element of the clinical team in their structure but changing the nature of these teams. Effective working in teams will also be one of the areas of assessment. The fact that these problems were increasing as some moves towards the structures to be found in foundation programmes were being introduced increases the importance of considering these areas.

3. We have tried to move in this direction in the discussion. However, the answers will vary between trusts. Our contention is that it is important to be aware of these issues and to take them in to account in new structures.

4. We have tried to explore the nature of the interview and responses a further. We have changed some of the quotes to illustrate the themes better. It would be difficult to balance these completely with further quotes on weaker evidence without making the article much longer. We have tried to show the balance with positive responses in some of the tables. We have removed the "quasi-quantitative descriptors". However, combining qualitative and quantitative data is an approach that can assist in the generalisability of the findings (Seale 1999:113-118) and offers more than reliance on anecdote alone. According to Seale (1999), Silverman (1993) and Bryman (1988) (refs 22-24) such a method does contribute to the validation and credibility of qualitative research.

5. We agree that there will be changes in foundation programmes and that junior doctors will need to learn to work in different forms of teams. However, these results show that they will need to be supported in these structures. Teamwork will be an element of assessment in the foundation programmes. These results illustrate that the ability to work in such teams is influenced by the organisation around them and the support provided. If there are to be changes to ad hoc and loosely defined teams as the referee suggests then this will have to be managed. In contrast some of the elements of supervision and educational
groupings in the foundation programmes suggest that there will need to be closer elements of teamwork.

Referee 3

We have tried to indicate that there are broader issues than teamwork and have changed the title to reflect this.

The discussion of IPE has been adjusted as suggested.