Reviewer's report

Title: Unhappiness and dissatisfaction in doctors cannot be predicted by selectors from medical school application forms: A prospective, longitudinal study

Version: 1 Date: 19 September 2005

Reviewer: Michael J Goldacre

Reviewer's report:

General: This is an interesting and important paper. The conclusions - that the assessors did not predict who would be happy or unhappy doctors - deserve to be widely known. They are so important that it might be prudent for the authors to recommend that the findings should be confirmed or refuted in a larger study (though I see no reason to expect that they would be different).

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

1. I found it took time, and two or three careful readings, to work out the distinction between the findings in Figure 2 and those in Figure 3, partly, I think, because the legends are so similar. Figure 2 is about the predictive power of the assessors' judgements in correctly identifying the happy doctor, and Figure 3 is about between-observer agreement in the judgements that they made. It might help if the opening phrases of the legend for Figure 2 said something like: "Predictive power of the individual assessors' judgements in correctly identifying the happy doctor in each of 20 pairs". And if the opening of the legend to Figure 3 said: "Between-assessor agreement in the number of pairs in which both assessors correctly identified the happy doctor". Whatever the detail, I think that the descriptions both on the legend and in the associated text need to be made clearer for ease of understanding. I also think that it would be helpful to the reader if the Abstract clarified that there were two measures of study outcome - first, the predictive power of the assessors' judgements, and, second, the extent of agreement between the assessors on each pair.

3. There are some minor typing errors:
   - Background, 2nd line: "or" (not "of")
   - Background, first para, penultimate line: delete comma after whether
   - Figure 2, legend, penultimate line: should read "the dark blue bar shows a pair".

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1. In Figure 2, there appears to be a peak at 10 in the blue bar. Using the authors' data, and a chi-squared test, I think that the assessors' judgements are more closely centred around 10 than would be expected by chance. Do the authors agree? This doesn't change their conclusions - if anything, it reinforces them.

2. In the Abstract, Methods, penultimate line, I think that it would be useful to replace the word "judged" with the phrase "used the doctors' original applications to judge".

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions
**Level of interest:** An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.