Reviewer's report

Title: The attractions of medicine: the generic motivations of medical school applicants in relation to demography, personality and achievement

Version: 1 Date: 16 August 2005

Reviewer: Deborah Saltman

Reviewer's report:

General.

This is a well-written but rather long paper on an area of great interest to medical educators. The study examines the results of a questionnaire to determine internal motivators to choosing to study medicine. As it stands the paper is long and overtly concerned with describing the statistical analyses. There are several areas which need clarification before it could be considered for publication.

1. Rationale for study

1.1 Highlighting what is new about the questionnaire that hasn't been tried before in the plethora of publications that abound in this area. As it stands the paper, the themes elucidated from the factor analyses already form the basis of some of interview questions at many universities that conduct interviews for entry into medical school.

1.2 Explaining why the questionnaire was not just an evaluation of a novel induction programme for prospective medical students. One must question the robustness of a once-off questionnaire which has not been tested on other populations for face and construct validity, let alone reliability. It would have been useful to see the results of another population group eg students intending to study another profession eg physiotherapists, nurses, lawyers and so.

2. Limitations of the Study

Whilst the authors make it clear that the study sample is no different from medical school cohorts in terms of demographics, there is no substantive information about whether the se students actually enrolled in medicine. This is a major limitation of the study.

3. Use of Figures

The figures are very decorative but not well-described and do not highlight findings in the text. New ways of presenting data need much more explanation.

4. Length

Even in electronic form the paper is too long and the key messages are lost.

As it stands, the paper needs a major revision.

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

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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)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Which journal?: Not appropriate for BMC Medicine: an article whose findings are important to those with closely related interests and more suited to BMC Medical Education

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests