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: 30 August 2005

Reviewer: Brian Jolly

Reviewer’s report:

General
This is an interesting, informative and innovative study of the motivations that a sample of applicants bring to a conference to enable them to select a career.

There are some general issues that need to be addressed.

1. Might there be particular attributes of or pressures on the cohort that would distinguish them or pre-select them from the UK population of prospective students? How is the national conference advertised? Where is it held? What is the expense of attending and how do students get there? Is there school support for some students?

2. The study relates a set of demographic variables to outcome variables defined by a new questionnaire. However virtually no details of the generation and validation of this questionnaire are provided. The premise seems to be that the factor analysis is the validation phase and the correlational study follows on from that. However, the two phases are using the same sample, and we have no independent corroborative validation of the factor structure (even though it holds together quite well).

There are also no papers quoted about the ontology of the questionnaire

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

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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. Some of the description of the questionnaire in the introduction would be more appropriate in the methods section.

2. The introduction is too long and includes occasional irrelevant or unreferenced statements (such as that about Freud p 4) that need removing.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Which journal?: Appropriate or potentially appropriate for BMC Medicine: an article of importance in its field

What next?: Accept for publication in BMC Medicine after minor essential revisions

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests