Author's response to reviews

Title: The Use of Standardized Patients for Mock Oral Board Exams in Neurology: A Pilot Study

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Author's response to reviews:

Response to Reviewers:

Title: The Use of Standardized Patients for Mock Oral Board Exams in Neurology: A Pilot Study
Version: 2

We again appreciate the thoughtful reviews of our manuscript. Hereafter are our responses to the critiques from Reviewer #2, as Reviewer #1 recommended acceptance without revision.

Reviewer #2:

General

I feel that the authors have missed an opportunity to place their educational innovation in a broader literature-based context. As in the original review, the authors cite a large number of references in the context of a single sentence, without any synthesis of the issues underlying this assessment technique. Further in their response to the review they indicate that "this is a novel use of SPs and a literature search found no relevant references with regards to the use of SPs in neurology training for residents." Apparently the authors believe that there is little to be learned from other specialties with regards to the reliability, validity and development and implementation of SP-based resident assessments. Their purpose seems to be solely related to documenting their own efforts without recognition of or contributing to existing literature on SP-based assessments.

We have changed the third paragraph of the introduction as follows:
"Although SPs were first used more than 30 years ago to teach and test medical students' clinical skills, reliance on the SP interaction as a teaching and testing tool has increased greatly in medical schools(2-15), as well as in residency programs across many disciplines(14-23). The importance of the SP interaction in medical education is demonstrated by the addition of an OSCE known as the USMLE Step 2 Clinical Skills (CS) examination as a new requirement for medical licensure in 2004. Reports in the literature confirm that short SP encounters in objective structured clinical examinations (OSCE) are a valid and reproducible testing, and much work has been done to validate the use of SP exams across many disciplines of medical training. However, the use of SP's for neurology mock oral board exams is a novel and innovative application, particularly as it is unknown whether SPs can accurately portray a patient with neurologic problems."

Minor Essential Revisions:
Typically in educational discussions learners are assessed and programs are evaluated, as in "Residents benefit from this formative assessment in that ..."
Changes have been made in the revised manuscript.