Reviewer's report

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

Version: 2 Date: 22 February 2006

Reviewer: Brian Mavis

Reviewer's report:

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.

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

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

none: the paper adequately documents the implementation of a SP-based formative assessment for neurology residents.

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Typically in educational discussions learners are assessed and programs are evaluated, as in "Residents benefit from this formative assessment in that ..."

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

none

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No
Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'