Author's response to reviews

Title: Learners' Decisions for Attending Pediatric Grand Rounds: a qualitative and quantitative study

Authors:

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Version: 2 Date: 21 February 2006

Author's response to reviews:

Dear BioMed Central Editor:
I thank the reviewers for doing a nice job and making very useful and important recommendations, all of which are addressed in the paper and below.

Reviewer #1:
Minor Essential Revisions
1. For table 1, provide information on who is in each of the groups in the table (through a footnote, possibly).
Done.

2. Provide a rationale for the division of the 59 participants into groups.
This is now explained in Part B of the Results section: Group 1 represents those in academic medical center practice; Group 2 represents those in community practice (community pediatricians, family practice physicians, and retired physicians); and Group 3 were all others.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
1. Consider adding some quotations from the qualitative to support and strengthen the results and to bring the concept map alive.
An appendix containing quotations has been added.

2. Tell us how you will use these data to plan rounds.
This is now in the 3rd sentence in the Conclusion section

Reviewer #2
General
1. No estimate is given of the response rate. I expect it is very low but knowing how many were mailed out would help determine that.
This number (442) has been added to the first sentence in the third paragraph in the Methods section.

2. Entertainment value of rounds was mentioned as an inducement to attend in the interviews but was not included in the questionnaire.
The quantitative survey was carried out during the same time period as the qualitative survey. It was not known at the time of the quantitative survey's creation that "entertainment value" would emerge from the interviews as an important feature.

3. A Likert scale type of questionnaire may have provided more information than a simple yes/no choice. One might speculate that Likert scale questions might have provided more information than a simple yes/no choice. I chose not to query for that additional detail because I speculated that it would introduce unwanted "noise" rather than increasing the "signal". I tried to imagine my response to such a question and concluded that more detail would likely a short-term view of stresses, rather than being a considered analysis of the entire year.

4. There is no mention of the questionnaire being pilot tested.
The third paragraph in the Methods section has been rewritten to say: "With the exception these two study questions, the content and format of the annual questionnaire is unchanged from year-to-year." The next-to-last sentence in that paragraph now states that these questions were not pilot tested.
5. In the interviews, did the authors explore the role of discussion at grand rounds since this is mentioned in some of the references cited?
The interviewees did not explicitly mention the role of discussion, so it is not included in the concept map. Representative quotations are now included in the Appendix which reflect the issues which surfaced during the interviews.

6. There is no data from people who did not attend rounds. This plus the problems with the questionnaire lead me to question the scientific validity of the paper. Because those who never attend grand rounds have no direct experience with this educational activity, they can't elucidate the factors influencing why they attend. By analogy, one can not get meaningful answers to questions asked in an empty room. We concur with the reviewer that such data is important, and in the manuscript we recognized this absence of data is one of the weaknesses of this study. However this can be the subject of a further research, perhaps by way of qualitative study of those who have hospital privileges but have never attended a single grand rounds presentation.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
1. Abstract - page 2 - text in Results is the same as in Methods.
   Corrected.
2. Page 5 - final paragraph - should specify how many physicians and non-physicians usually attend rounds. This will help put the numbers of interview participants and questionnaire respondents in context.
   This has been added to the second sentence in the first paragraph in the Methods section that there were 299 physicians and 207 non-physicians.
   It is important for the reviewers and editor to note that we discovered an error in the database which drove the original data in the manuscript which reported 601 grand rounds participants. That number was in error. We recognized that because of lost and replaced electronic ID cards (sometimes with a different ID number), certain individuals in the database had multiple accounts. We have subsequently reunited the fragmented accounts and have corrected our manuscript to state that there were 506 attendees. This change does not make any material difference to the study, because as reviewer #1 the survey response rate is low either way, and this number is not used elsewhere in this report. I can assure the reviewers and editor that the database now has integrity and we are now reporting an accurate number.

3. Page 6 - paragraph 1 - should specify how many retired physicians were invited to attend.
   The manuscript now states that there were 13 retired physicians invited to take part in the interviews.

4. Page 6 - final paragraph - should specify if the questionnaire was pilot tested for face validity. I realize that it's not always possible to test questionnaires exhaustively before administration, but they should be reviewed by some potential respondents. It may have been better to use 5-point Likert scale rather than a simple yes/no choice.
   As stated above, the third paragraph in the Methods section has been rewritten to say: "With the exception these two study questions, the content and format of the annual questionnaire is unchanged from year-to-year." The next-to-last sentence in that paragraph now states that these questions were not pilot tested. Also stated above is the rationale why the questionnaire was designed to query for a simple yes/no choice, and a consideration why a 5-point Likert scale may not have produced higher quality data.

5. Page 6 - final paragraph - should specify how many questionnaires were sent out. This will allow some estimate of response rate which I expect is quite low.
   The first sentence in the Methods sections now states that 442 questionnaires were distributed.

6. Page 7 - paragraph 1 - should specify if questionnaire asked respondents to identify their profession.
   The 4th sentence from the end of the Methods section now states this data.

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. Page 12 - paragraph 2, line 6. The word "be" has been left out.
   Rewritten.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
1. Page 4, paragraph 2 says grand rounds attract a large audience but page 3 paragraph 3 says a large fraction of the potential grand rounds audience chooses not to attend. These seem contradictory. This study was not designed to determine the size of our potential grand rounds audience, so we don't
know the actual fraction which chooses to not attend. The final paragraph of the Conclusion section has been re-written to better address why the results of this study could potentially be used to increase the size of the grand rounds audience.

Sincerely,
Jack Dolcourt