Author's response to reviews

Title: Using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire to teach medical students developmental assessment: a descriptive analysis

Authors:
   Pam A Nicol (pam.nicol@uwa.edu.au)

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Nicol, P.

Thank you for the comments. The article has been revamped to take into account the reviewer's comments as far as possible. These are:

Qualitative approach: identified as an interpretive study base on a phenomenological approach.

Aims: are now in both the abstract and the fist paragraph of the background. The aims of the program and the evaluation are clearly distinguished.

Student reports are not at interview, but written comments in their reports for which formative feedback is given (i.e. no marks allocated as this report does not contribute to summative assessment marks for the unit). The reviewer has misunderstood this point. The text now includes the words "written report."

It was not possible to support student reports with "additional objective measures", because there were none, and this has not been stated as an aim of the study. The lack of supporting data is now explained in the text. Although an OSCE clinical exam has been introduced in 2005, there is no comparative data and this data were not the aim of the evaluation for this paper.

While data could have been presented on comparisons of the same child, this was not the point of the paper, which was to evaluate the effect of the program on students, not the ASQ itself. Similarly, while it would be of interest to know what developmental aspects students and parents agreed on, that is a subject for another paper. In the next paragraph, the reviewer already states that the paper is overly long, which has partly resulted from addressing the reviewers questions.

Students did not complete the ASQ because it is designed to be completed by parents as part of a development assessment tool in a child health monitoring program. This was already stated in the text. Its use in the context of an educational program is new, and, although it is felt that this was already clear in the text, it has now been made explicit in the conclusion.