Reviewer's report

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

Version: 3 Date: 19 December 2005

Reviewer: Maree O'Keefe

Reviewer's report:

General

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

The author has now included further information relating to the methods as requested, however there is little explicit information offered relating to the qualitative approach used in the interview analysis which formed a large part of the evaluation. The aims are more clearly described, but this should be provided as part of the introduction so that the reader is oriented to the study, not buried in the methods.

This is still not an easy paper to read and understand what was done. The program as presented was a 1 hour lecture, a 30 minute tutorial, a developmental assessment of a child undertaken by students using the Stycar developmental milestones, review of a parent completed ASQ and a written report. Increasing student confidence in developmental assessment was assessed by student responses to one questionnaire item and student self report at interview. Appraisal of student learning and attitude towards the parents’ role was assessed by student self report at interview. Parent perceptions of the program were assessed by parent completed questionnaire and reported as mean scores.

The use of student self-report adds rich contextual information but would have been better if supported by additional objective measures as this was one of the study aims. For example, could students demonstrate their learning, how did the students perform in examinations, what as the range of student marks for the written report? Data could have been presented on the actual comparisons of student and parent developmental assessment of the same child rather than a simple statement that there was 70% agreement. I wondered why students did not complete the ASQ in addition to the other instrument. It would be of interest to know what developmental aspects the parents and students agreed on, and on what they differed. The qualitative analysis appears to have been solely undertaken by one person whose relationship to the students is not stated.

Although the study explores an interesting and relevant concept in teaching child development, it is overly long for its content.

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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)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory 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