Reviewer's report

Title: Quality of Care Associated with Number of Cases Seen and Self-reports of Clinical Competence for Japanese Physicians-in-training in Internal Medicine

Version: 1 Date: 13 February 2006

Reviewer: shahram yazdani

Reviewer's report:

General:
This article successfully attempts to address a very interesting, yet complex question. Although medical education experiments of this sort usually suffer from over abundance of variables, they have done an acceptable job of accounting for different variables.
The data seems fairly sound; however it is not extremely well controlled as pointed out below.
Lack of a reader's familiarity with the Japanese system of medical education may lead to the reader's confusion at the beginning. The following suggested changes may in fact help the interested reader follow the article from the beginning.

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

1- The abstract seems to be a fair summary of the article and alerts the potential reader of the content. However, the last sentence in the conclusion makes no sense until the reader has completed the article.

2- Please better define "better educational system" such as the one in "institution J"

3- The wording, English structure and most importantly, the line of logic makes the "Discussion" difficult to follow. The discussion seems to overemphasize the article's shortcomings rather than concentrating on the conclusion at hand. Please restructure.

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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)

1- The first sentence of page 13 says "there were no significant INTERACTIONS between the amount of clinical exposure and ....." Do they mean correlation instead of INTERACTIONS?

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1- explain how many years of residency most internists go through, how many different medical schools composed the observed group of residents

2- We recommend exclusion of those who have had other experiences (clinical, laboratory, etc.) between their medical school graduation and first year of residency.
Inclusion of these graduates introduces a variable that can not be accurately accounted for and is wrong in principle. The low number of such trainees makes their statistical correlation obsolete. It also reduced reproducibility of this experiment nearly impossible in places such as U.S.
What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Statistical review: Yes

Declaration of competing interests:
'I declare that I have no competing interests'