Reviewer's report

Title: A Mid Year Comparison Study of Career Satisfaction and Emotional States between Residents and Faculty at One Academic Medical Center

Version: 1 Date: 29 May 2006

Reviewer: James Coverdill

Reviewer's report:

General

This paper compares the attitudes and experiences of faculty and residents in one academic medical center. The cross-sectional survey appears to have been properly designed and conducted. Response rates (66 and 72 percent for faculty and residents, respectively) are on the high side for studies of this sort and are perfectly acceptable. I enjoyed reading the paper and believe that it makes a contribution to the broader literature on graduate medical education. I recommend that the paper be published.

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

None

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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. On page 5, the first sentence notes that all clinical faculty "who utilized the electronic data management system" were surveyed. I'd note briefly that nearly all faculty use this system (as in "representing XX percent of clinical faculty who use the . . . ") if that's the case. If a sizable percentage don't use that system, then it is important to let readers know that percentage and to say that there may be concerns about sample selection bias (surely those who don't use the system differ in systematic ways from those who do).

2. The notation for "p-values" should be consistent. In some places, it's presented as a decimal, as in .00 (e.g., p. 6, bottom paragraph); in other places, it's a percentage (e.g., top of p. 8 and Table 1).

3. On page 7 (middle paragraph), please explain what you mean by the "average proportion of positive and negative aspects of the professional experience."

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1. The main comparison that drives the analysis is the overall difference between faculty and residents. Why feature that broad comparison? What particular contribution does it make? My guess is that readers would anticipate most of the differences that are observed. Did you consider exploring the data a bit more fully to determine if there are, say, interesting or sizable effects of common suspects like specialty or gender? Any way for you to explore factors associated with the size of the gap between faculty and residents? I'd thus aim to justify the comparison more fully early on in the paper, perhaps drawing out expectations from previous studies, and then probe the comparison more fully in the analysis section. It's never satisfying to read--or to write--that the reasons for the differences between faculty and residents are "not understood" (p. 9). My sense is that you have the data to probe this main contrast more carefully and thus shed more light on the matter. A few more minor issues:

2. It would be helpful if a short description of the "negative" and "positive" items preceded the discussion of the results (p. 7). At first glance, readers will assume "more positive" naturally implies "less negative," but what you are really doing is discussing two banks of questions, one of which taps positive aspects of emotion and experience, the other negative.

3. It would be helpful to readers to have all of the relevant figures in a table rather than selective results in
figures (p. 7, bottom paragraph).

**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.